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ABSTRACT

A program was developed and implemented to improve the reading achievement of 56 learning-disabled (LD) students in grades five through eight in a rural school district in South Carolina. Only 12% of the students were meeting the state standard in reading. Baseline test data indicated that reading achievement was from two to six grade levels below grade placement. Problems identified were absence of written basic skills curriculum aligned with the tests used to measure achievement; lack of consistent, effective instruction in the basic skills areas; and the need for more parental support and involvement in the education of students with special needs. Solution strategies for improving reading achievement of LD students included the development of functional basic skill curriculum guides, training for teachers in the use of direct instruction techniques, field testing the curriculum guide, inclusion of the basic skills objectives in the individualized education programs of the students, implementation of a direct-instruction model in the teaching of reading, use of the Corrective Reading Program, and involvement of parents. As a result of intervention strategies, 25% of the targeted students met the state standard on basic skill tests. Over 55% of the targeted students gained two or more grade levels in reading. The discrepancy between the students' estimated ability and reading achievement was reduced by 41%. Parent involvement increased from 10% to 75%. (Seventeen tables of data are included; 49 references, 10 appendixes of data, table of contents of the Students Offered Success curriculum, evaluation forms, and a newspaper article are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Developing and Implementing a Curriculum and Instructional Program to Improve Reading Achievement of Middle-Grade Students with Learning Disabilities in a Rural School District

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by

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A Major Applied Research Project Report
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders
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Abstract

Developing and Implementing a Curriculum and Instructional Program to Improve Reading Achievement of Middle-Grade Students with Learning Disabilities in a Rural School District

This report describes a program for improving the reading achievement of 56 learning-disabled (LD) students in grades 5 through 8 in a rural school district. The targeted LD students were initially identified by their teachers as their poorest readers. Only 12% of the students were meeting the state standard in reading. Baseline test data indicated that reading achievement was from two to six grade levels below grade placement with a mean difference of two standard deviations between the students' cognitive ability as measured by the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) and reading achievement as measured by the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (K-TEA). Problems identified were absence of written basic-skills curriculum aligned with the tests used to measure achievement; lack of consistent, effective instruction in the basic-skills areas; and the need for more parental support and involvement in the education of students with special needs.

Solution strategies for improving the reading achievement of LD students included the development of functional basic-skills curriculum guides, training for teachers in the use of direct-instruction techniques, field-testing the curriculum guide, inclusion of the basic-skills objectives in the individualized education programs of the students, implementation of a direct-instruction model in the teaching of reading, use of the Corrective Reading Program, and involvement of parents.

As a result of the MARP intervention strategies, 25% of the targeted students met the state standard on basic skills tests. Over 55% of the targeted students gained two or more grade levels in reading. The discrepancy between the student's estimated ability and reading achievement was reduced by 41%. Parent involvement increased from 10% to 75%. In addition to the quantifiable data, many other positive side effects resulted from the project.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement, Background, and Documentation

Problem Statement and Primary Evidence

On the 1991 South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), 80% of the eighth-grade learning-disabled (LD) students in Chesterfield County School District scored below the standard. On individually administered reading tests, LD students in grades 5 through 8 consistently performed from two to six grade levels below grade placement and scored from one to four standard deviations below estimated ability.

Overview of Problem Setting

Chesterfield School District, the setting of the problem, was a geographically large county-wide district located in northeastern South Carolina. Four major attendance zones with 16 schools served approximately 8,000 students in a wide variety of educational programs. The ethnic makeup of the very rural county was 66% white and 34% nonwhite (South Carolina Department of Education, 1991).

Annually, Chesterfield County School District provided special services for over 800 students who had been identified as handicapped. During 1991, approximately 80% of these were placed in resource (part-day) programs. Students with more involved handicapping conditions were served in self-contained (most of the day) programs. Student placements were considered to be in the least restrictive environment (LRE) because they were educated with their nonhandicapped peers in a school close to their home.

Each of the 16 schools in the district had one or more classes for students with special needs. More than 50 special teachers were employed. These teachers were under the direct supervision of the school principal. However, the Special Services Department was primarily responsible for identification and placement of eligible students, individual educational planning, parent/teacher consultation, and curriculum development and implementation for special programs.

The Special Services Department, which served approximately 10% of the district's total student population in programs for exceptional students, provided programs for preschool developmentally delayed, gifted, speech and language impaired, learning-disabled (LD), hearing and visually impaired, mentally handicapped, emotionally/behaviorally handicapped, and orthopedically/other health impaired students. The Special Services Department was comprised of a director, one education evaluator, four speech clinicians, one home-school coordinator, two secretaries, and one school psychologist (the MARP manager).

Although the county was politically conservative, Chesterfield School District had been progressive in its efforts to provide quality educational programs for its students. Program expansion, capital investment, and staff-development endeavors had greatly increased from 1985 to 1991. Improvement in instructional programs through efforts to improve the caliber of personnel hired and the quality of staff-development activities resulted in generally higher performance on statewide test scores for the district.

In keeping with the Effective Schools movement, the South Carolina legislature established the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) (Basic Skills Assessment Program Act, 1978). Commitment to educational reform was expanded under the leadership of Governor Richard Riley, and additional legislation was passed (Education Improvement Act, 1984). This legislation established promotion and graduation standards based in part on student performance on the state testing program. These provisions applied to handicapped students as well as to regular education students. In 1991, Chesterfield County School District exceeded the state average for seniors passing the Exit Exam by almost one-half percent. However, this improved performance did not hold true for the mildly handicapped population.

Evidence of Discrepancy

The statewide tests were administered at grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 10. At grade 10 the BSAP became the Exit Exam. Schools were rewarded through provisions of the Education Improvement Act on the basis of improvements in achievement on the BSAP and on attendance of students and teachers. These programs had made a great impact on the educational programs in South Carolina and in Chesterfield County as evidenced by a comparison of the percentage of students meeting the minimum standards in 1984 (when the program was initiated) and in 1991, as shown on Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of 1984 and 1991 BSAP Results, Chesterfield County School District, Percentage Meeting Minimum Standards

	Reading		Writing		Math	
Grade	1984	1991	1984	1991	1984	1991
1	70.6	74.4	-	-	74.7	74.0
2	64.8	76.8	-	-	73.5	84.2
3	72.8	83.1	-	-	73.8	79.4
6	66.0	71.6	69.6	71.5	57.4	62.6
8	54.1	67.8	60.7	71.2	43.4	70.2
10	70.2	81.1	72.6	84.6	72.2	81.3

Gains in the percentage of total students meeting the state standard increased at all grade levels and in all three basic skills areas over the years. Except in sixth-grade mathematics and eighth-grade reading, over 70% of the students met the standard in all three areas tested. Therefore, the district showed significant educational improvement on the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

However, improvement was not indicated on the District Demographic Report (Chesterfield County School District, 1991a) showing the percentage of handicapped students meeting the standard. Although state law required that all students take the BSAP, a handicapped student could be excluded from taking the BSAP through the individual education program (IEP) process. However, if a student's IEP Committee decided a student was not to participate in the BSAP, this eliminated that student from receiving a state diploma. The handicapped students who took the BSAP were primarily LD students whose IEP Committee, based on individual psychoeducational assessments and classroom performance, decided that the minimum skills tested were within their ability.

Given the importance of performance on the BSAP in determining promotion and graduation standards, the information presented in Table 2 seemed to indicate a significant need for LD students to increase their BSAP scores.

Table 2

BSAP Results for LD Students, Chesterfield County School District, 1991
Percentage Meeting the Standard

Grade	Reading	Mathematics	Writing
1	57.1	53.6	
2	47.5	71.4	
3	46.2	73.1	
6	27.7	29.8	22.2
8	20.0	33.3	20.0
10	27.3	18.2	27.3

More of the LD students in grade 1 met the South Carolina standard than did not in both reading and mathematics. However, the number decreased in reading each year and significantly dropped at grade 6, never to be recovered again. This provided evidence of real problems between spring testing in third grade and spring testing in sixth grade.

An analysis of the items needing improvement at grade 6 showed a significant discrepancy between the skills of nonhandicapped and LD students. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the percentage of LD students and regular students at grade 6 needing improvement on the basic-skills items.

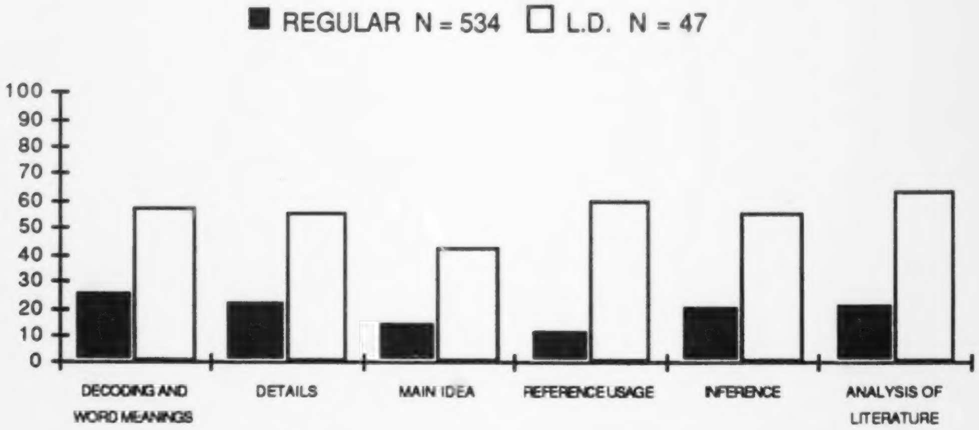

Figure 1. A Comparison of the Percentage of Learning-Disabled and Regular Sixth-Grade Students Needing Improvement on 1991 BSAP Items.

At grade 8, the discrepancy became even wider between the basic skills knowledge of nonhandicapped and LD students. When the basic-skills test results for eighth graders were analyzed, the nonhandicapped students continued to improve in most areas. However, the LD students continued to fall farther behind in all the basic skills resulting in larger discrepancies between the performance of the regular-education and LD students. Figure 2 reveals this ever-widening disparity in skills tested on the BSAP.

By the time LD students were in the eighth grade, their basic skills in reading greatly needed improvement. Decoding, word meaning, and reference usage appeared especially weak for almost three-fourths of the LD students. Approximately

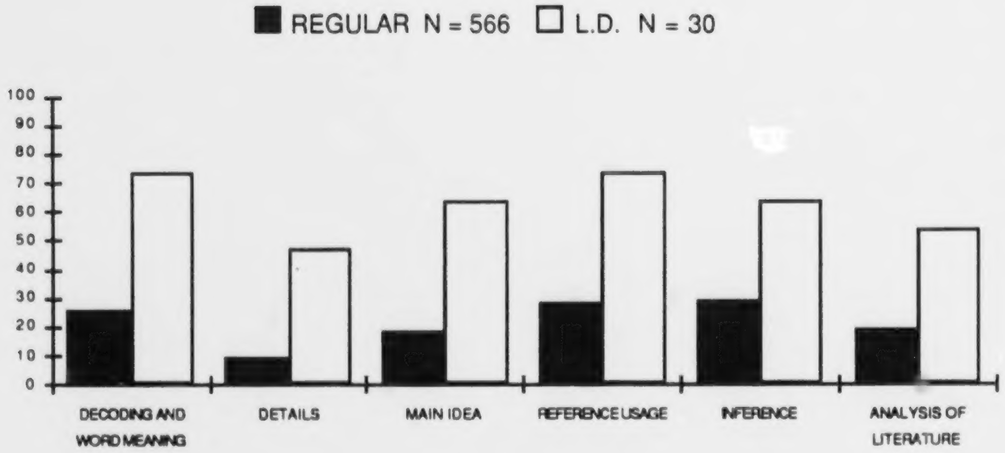

Figure 2. A Comparison of the Percentage of Learning-Disabled and Regular Eighth-Grade Students Needing Improvement on 1991 BSAP Items.

two-thirds of the LD population needed improvement in finding the main idea and making inferences. Fewer LD students, approximately 50%, needed improvement in finding details and analysis of literature.

After grade 8, the BSAP is not administered again until grade 10 when it becomes the Exit Exam. All students must pass all three areas of the Exit Exam to receive a high school diploma. If students taking the Exit Exam at grade 10 fail to meet the standard in either mathematics, reading, or writing, they can attempt it again in grades 11 and 12. The Demographic Report (Chesterfield County School District, 1991a) showed a disproportionate number of handicapped students scoring below the standard at grade 10 as shown in Table 3. The lack of basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics made it extremely difficult for LD students to get a diploma and caused many to drop out of school before they had the vocational skills needed to get a job. When students are already older than their classmates and they fail the BSAP, they become very discouraged. Many of these students drop out at age 17 when they are no longer legally required to attend school.

Table 3

Percentage Below Standard on Exit Exam at Grade 10

1991	Mathematics	Reading	Writing
Nonhandicapped	17	18	14
Handicapped	82	73	73

All three basic skills areas tested--mathematics, reading, and writing--must be passed before a student can receive a high school diploma. Over three-fourths of the mildly handicapped students were not successful on the 1991 Exit Exam. Of special significance for this project was the high percentage of handicapped students below the standard in reading. Handicapped students who took the BSAP were primarily LD students whose IEP Committee had determined, based on individual psychoeducational assessment, classroom performance, and educator judgement, that the minimal skills tested were within their ability.

The target group for this project was 56 LD students from grades 5 through 8. Of this group, 22 had not taken the BSAP. An IEP meeting is held at least annually for each LD student. At the IEP meeting, it is determined whether the student will participate in the statewide tests administered to all nonhandicapped students. The IEP Committee of these students had determined that they would not take the tests due to their level of skills. The test was determined to be appropriate for the remaining 34 students. Test results for fifth and sixth graders were from tests taken when they were in the third grade because the BSAP was not given at grades 4 and 5. Students in grades 7 and 8 had taken the BSAP in grade 6. Table 4 shows the most recent BSAP reading scores for target students who had taken the test. Each student was assigned a number. Missing numbers on the table indicate that the student did not participate in BSAP testing.

Table 4

Last BSAP Reading Scores for Target Group of Learning-Disabled Students

Grade	Student Number	Last BSAP Reading Score
5	1	609
5	3	587
5	5	600
5	16	672
5	17	600
5	43	612
5	44	672
5	47	656
5	49	602
6	2	591
6	4	572
6	6	591
6	7	683
6	8	600
6	9	738*
6	18	645
6	51	809*
6	52	738*
6	53	713*
7	10	585
7	11	618
7	12	574
7	13	762*
7	14	762*
7	15	596
7	19	638
7	21	562
7	22	748*
7	23	548
7	24	522
7	25	690
7	54	690
7	55	679
8	45	501

Note: N=34. Score required for meeting the standard = 700. *Denotes scores meeting the standard.

Because 22 students (34%) had not participated in BSAP and 27 of the students (48%) who took the test had not met the standard (700), a mere 7 (12%) students had met the minimal, basic-skills standard. The conclusion was, that if effective interventions were not employed at the middle grades, these students would continue the tradition of high school failure for the majority of LD students in the district.

The participants of the target group were carefully chosen. Resource and self-contained LD teachers across Chesterfield County School District were asked to select their most problematic readers to participate in a project designed to improve reading achievement. Originally, the teachers recommended 62 students. The Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (K-TEA) was administered as a pretest to each of the 62 recommended students. Kaufman and Kaufman (1985) described the test in the manual as an individually administered measure of achievement, which may be used with students 6 to 19 years of age. The standard scores (SS) on the K-TEA have a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15; therefore, the scores can be compared to the standard scores or intelligence quotients (IQ) yielded by the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (Wechsler, 1974), a reputable, widely used measure of ability.

Each of the target students had been evaluated recently with the Wechsler Intelligence Scale-Revised (WISC-R), as part of the requirement for participation in the program for LD students. In the manual, Wechsler (1974) described the WISC-R as a standardized, individually administered test yielding three separate intelligent quotients for verbal, performance, and full-scale scores. Each is a deviation IQ with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

When test data were compiled, six of the recommended students had less than one standard deviation (SD) discrepancy between ability standard scores, as measured by the WISC-R, and reading achievement SS, as measured by the K-TEA. This indicated that these students were either slow learners or their specific learning disability was in some area other than reading. Therefore, these six students were eliminated from the target group.

Comparisons were made of the students' standard scores in total reading as measured by the K-TEA and their WISC-R verbal, performance, and full scale IQ scores (see Table 5). The test results for the remaining 56 students showed significant

Table 5

Comparison of Reading Achievement and Ability Standard Scores of Target Students

School	Student	WISC-R			K-TEA Total Reading	Discrepancy between Highest IQ and Total Reading	Discrepancy in Standard Deviations
		VIQ	PIQ	FSIQ			
A	1	81	85	82	60	25	1.67
	2	80	86	81	58	28	1.87
	3	79	90	83	62	28	1.87
	4	80	90	84	60	30	2.00
	5	97	85	90	65	32	2.13
	6	80	88	85	58	30	2.00
	7	103	115	110	74	41	2.73
	8	84	81	81	53	31	2.07
B	9	87	102	83	60	24	1.60
	10	84	84	82	60	24	1.60
	11	73	87	78	72	15	1.00
	12	79	90	83	64	26	1.73
	13	88	87	87	66	22	1.47
	14	91	84	86	71	20	1.33
	15	86	90	87	67	23	1.53
C	16	82	85	82	66	19	1.26
	17	79	88	82	61	27	1.80
	18	90	98	92	72	26	1.73
D	19	80	101	89	62	39	2.60
	20	82	92	86	72	20	1.33
	21	79	87	81	64	23	1.53
	22	118	106	114	81	37	2.47
	23	84	91	86	56	35	2.33
	24	94	128	109	67	61	4.07
	25	94	88	90	64	30	2.00
E	26	101	106	103	80	26	1.73
	27	81	93	86	62	31	2.06
	28	94	74	83	60	34	2.27
	29	86	88	86	61	27	1.80
	30	105	106	105	76	30	2.00
	31	75	88	80	67	21	1.40
	32	103	84	92	85	18	1.20
F(1)	33	78	82	78	66	16	1.07
	34	85	93	88	56	37	2.47
	35	79	100	87	59	41	2.73
	36	87	85	85	59	28	1.87
	37	85	93	88	69	24	1.60
	38	80	85	81	70	15	1.00
	39	92	109	100	73	36	2.40
	40	70	93	79	75	18	1.20
	41	81	98	88	55	43	2.87
	42	82	95	87	74	21	1.40
F(2)	43	85	102	92	69	33	2.20
	44	96	106	101	70	36	2.40
	45	80	101	89	57	44	2.93
	46	73	95	82	67	28	1.87
G(1)	47	85	70	80	68	17	1.13
	48	85	79	80	62	23	1.53
	49	74	81	76	62	19	1.27
	50	60	92	74	77	15	1.00
G(2)	51	109	92	100	89	20	1.33
	52	84	88	85	68	20	1.33
	53	91	96	92	81	15	1.00
	54	90	86	87	74	16	1.07
	55	86	96	90	81	15	1.00
	56	81	88	84	71	17	1.13

Legend: Numbers in parenthesis denote different teachers in the same school.

discrepancies between estimated ability and reading achievement. The discrepancies ranged from one to four standard deviations (SD).

Typically, LD students exhibit variability in skills within and between the verbal and performance scales of the WISC-R. Because of this, each student's highest standard score (IQ) on the WISC-R was used to determine the discrepancy between ability and the total reading achievement standard score from the K-TEA. The differences ranged from 15 to 61 points or 1.0 to 4.07 SD. These data indicated a significant discrepancy between estimated ability and reading achievement for all the students in the target group. A significant discrepancy between ability and achievement is one of the criteria used in identification of LD students. Therefore, a discrepancy should be expected in any LD population, but 64% of the students in the target group showed a difference of more than 1.5 SD between estimated ability and reading achievement. This much difference constitutes a highly significant discrepancy.

Because BSAP scores and classroom performance were used to determine promotion from one grade to the next, most of the students in the target group had been retained one or more years in the same grade. Therefore, they were older than the normal age for their grade. Nevertheless, they continued to score from one to six grade levels below grade placement. The target group's actual grade placement in school compared to reading grade equivalents as measured by the K-TEA showed a mean difference of 2.47 grade levels. Over 35% of the students' reading-composite grade equivalents were still at grade 1. Thus, there was evidence of a major problem in reading achievement for LD students in the middle grades of the Chesterfield County Schools. Table 6 shows the students' chronological ages, grade placements, and grade equivalents obtained on the K-TEA for Decoding, Comprehension, and Reading Composite.

Table 6

Grade Placement Compared to K-TEA Reading Grade Equivalents of Target Students

				K-TEA Grade Equivalents		
School	Student	Age	Grade Placement	Decoding	Comprehension	Reading Composite
A	1	12-8	5.2	1.7	1.3	1.5
	2	12-9	6.2	1.5	1.3	1.4
	3	11-9	6.2	1.5	1.3	1.4
	4	12-0	6.2	1.6	1.2	1.3
	5	11-9	5.2	1.8	1.6	1.7
	6	13-1	6.2	1.7	1.3	1.5
	7	11-1	6.2	3.0	2.3	2.6
	8	13-1	6.2	1.7	1.2	1.1
B	9	13-1	6.2	3.6	4.3	3.9
	10	14-4	7.2	2.4	2.4	2.4
	11	13-1	7.2	2.8	2.9	2.9
	12	14-1	7.2	3.4	2.4	2.9
	13	14-5	7.2	3.4	3.1	3.2
	14	14-1	7.2	3.4	4.5	3.9
	15	14-0	7.2	4.0	2.4	3.1
C	16	11-6	5.2	1.7	1.8	1.9
	17	11-11	5.2	1.4	1.3	1.3
	18	12-4	6.2	2.0	1.9	1.9
D	19	13-9	7.2	2.2	2.8	2.5
	20	13-2	7.2	3.2	3.3	3.2
	21	13-0	7.2	2.3	2.3	2.3
	22	12-0	7.2	4.8	2.9	3.8
	23	14-7	7.2	2.1	2.2	2.1
	24	13-9	7.2	2.4	3.5	2.9
	25	14-6	7.2	3.0	3.3	3.1
E	26	11-2	5.2	3.2	2.9	3.0
	27	12-9	5.2	1.8	1.9	1.8
	28	13-3	6.2	2.0	1.9	1.9
	29	13-11	6.2	2.1	2.6	2.3
	30	12-6	6.2	3.8	3.1	3.4
	31	12-4	6.2	2.1	2.3	2.2
	32	10-3	5.2	3.4	2.9	3.1
F(1)	33	11-11	6.2	2.0	1.9	1.9
	34	11-9	6.2	1.1	1.0	1.1
	35	12-10	6.2	1.6	1.7	1.6
	36	11-6	6.2	1.2	1.0	1.1
	37	14-1	7.2	2.8	4.1	3.4
	38	11-2	5.2	2.6	1.8	2.2
	39	11-3	5.2	2.1	2.8	2.4
	40	12-0	5.2	2.7	3.3	3.0
	41	13-3	8.2	1.4	1.5	1.4
	42	14-3	8.2	5.6	3.1	4.2
F(2)	43	12-10	5.2	2.6	2.8	2.6
	44	12-0	5.2	2.1	2.8	2.4
	45	14-7	8.2	2.2	2.3	2.2
	46	15-0	8.2	5.3	2.8	3.9
G(1)	47	10-7	5.2	1.6	1.6	1.6
	48	12-2	5.2	1.6	1.6	1.5
	49	12-8	5.2	1.7	1.6	1.7
	50	10-6	5.2	2.3	2.3	2.3
G(2)	51	12-0	6.2	4.0	6.1	4.9
	52	13-4	6.2	2.7	2.9	2.8
	53	12-9	6.2	3.8	4.5	4.1
	54	13-2	7.2	3.0	4.1	3.5
	55	14-0	7.2	4.8	2.9	3.8
	56	13-5	7.2	4.5	3.3	3.8

Related Problem Data

It was suspected that discipline notices, absences, and failing grades were possibly related to the students' low achievement in reading. Because many LD students had difficulties in these areas, the data were analyzed for each of the targeted students. In each school, the data showed that the greatest number of absences was usually generated by two or three students who had excessive absences with the majority of students showing very few absences. Similarly, failing grades and discipline notices were accumulated by some; but not all of the students had failing grades or discipline notices. Seven of the students had no absences, failing grades, or discipline notices. No absences were recorded for 16 of the students. Surprisingly, 31 students had no failing grades, and 26 had no discipline notices.

Comparative analysis across the data revealed no apparent linkage between failing grades, absences, and discipline notices. The two students (student 3 and student 39) with the most days absent (15 and 16 respectively) had no failing grades. Likewise, the students (student 10 and student 32) with the most discipline notices (20 and 15 respectively) had either no failing grades or fewer failing grades than some students with no discipline notices. Furthermore, the student (student 16) with the most failing grades (11) was absent only two days and had seven discipline notices. Therefore, no correlation between these variables could be established. Table 7 shows the number of failing grades, days absent, and discipline notices for each of the 56 students in the target group for the first semester of the 1991-1992 school year.

However, the data on Table 7 revealed insights about the program models and the schools from which the target students came. The students in self-contained LD classes (A, F1, and G1) generally seemed to have fewer failing grades. Without doubt, this was due to the smaller group setting and specialized instruction received in the self-contained model. In this model, the students spend the majority of the school day

Table 7

Number of Failing Grades, Days Absent, and Discipline Notices by School for Target Group, First Semester, 1991-1992 School Year N-56

School	Student	Absences	Failing Grades	Discipline Notices
A	1	0	1	4
	2	6	0	6
	3	15	0	4
	4	4	1	4
	5	10	0	7
	6	7	1	0
	7	0	0	0
	8	2	2	2
B	9	0	0	0
	10	8	5	20
	11	0	0	0
	12	8	5	5
	13	2	2	8
	14	1	6	4
	15	2	7	7
C	16	2	11	7
	17	9	6	11
	18	0	6	0
	19	12	0	7
	20	0	1	0
	21	0	3	6
	22	0	1	3
	23	0	0	7
	24	0	0	0
	25	8	0	2
E	26	11	0	5
	27	5	2	0
	28	5	2	2
	29	1	0	8
	30	2	1	0
	31	0	0	9
	32	7	0	15
F(1)	33	11	0	0
	34	0	0	0
	35	3	0	11
	36	2	0	0
	37	3	0	1
	38	2	0	0
	39	16	0	13
	40	5	0	6
	41	4	0	7
	42	1	4	0
F(2)	43	6	0	0
	44	7	1	4
	45	1	0	0
	46	0	0	0
G(1)	47	1	0	0
	48	0	0	0
	49	13	0	0
	50	2	6	0
G(2)	51	0	0	0
	52	5	8	0
	53	2	8	0
	54	4	5	0
	55	2	3	0
	56	0	0	0

with the LD teacher. The number of failing grades seemed to vary significantly from school to school. Students in Schools A, D, E, and F received less than one failing grade per student, and students from School C received an average of eight per student. One student (student 16) generated the majority of the failing grades (11). The students in this school attended a resource class for one period a day. Even in the resource room, the students were allowed much unstructured time. Therefore, it appeared that the more restrictive model and the structured school program resulted in fewer failing grades for the target students.

Possible Cause Data from the Problem Setting

There were many possible causes why the reading achievement of LD students was extremely low. The most obvious contributing factor was the handicapping condition itself. All of the students in the target group had been identified as having a specific learning disability in the reading area. This means that the students' performance on standardized measures of cognitive skills was significantly better than their performance on standardized reading achievement tests. The mean difference between the target group's cognitive ability and reading achievement standard scores was 27 (see Table 5). A learning disability is a cause for low reading achievement, but a learning disability cannot be used as an excuse by educators not to provide the best opportunities possible for the students to learn to read.

All too frequently, teachers had lower expectations for students once they had been identified as handicapped. Evidence of this was seen in the number of LD students not being recommended to take the statewide tests. Thirty-nine percent of the target group had not taken the BSAP. Typical reasons given for recommending that a student not take the tests were as follows: (a) the student can't read well enough to take the test, (b) the student becomes easily frustrated, and (c) the student will just mark answers without reading.

Even though regular teachers and administrators who were on the IEP Committee, which made the decision about test participation, did not verbalize it, the fact that students who scored low could bring down the class or school average score may have influenced them to recommend that LD students not participate in BSAP. A survey of regular education teachers who have LD students in their classes indicated that 76% of the teachers did not think that LD students should take the BSAP even though it tested minimal basic skills (see Appendix A, Item #4).

The IEP Committee was composed of the student's regular teacher, LD teacher, parent, administrator, and sometimes others who had worked with the student. This committee decided whether the student would participate in the statewide testing program. When the IEP Committee decided that a student would not take the BSAP tests, it was essentially equivalent to making a decision that the student would not receive a diploma. Because students who took the BSAP were usually given more practice in test-taking skills, LD students not recommended to take the tests missed this important practice. Therefore, it did not seem to be in the best interest of LD students to be routinely exempted from the tests.

Unfortunately, lowered expectations were found among special teachers of LD students as well. They did not expect their students to succeed. Fifteen questionnaires were sent to special teachers of LD students. Twelve were returned and compiled (see Appendix B). Almost 42% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they expected less than 5% of the LD students presently in their classes to earn a high school diploma. Lowered expectations, without doubt, contributed to underachievement in reading.

The Effective Schools literature strongly recommended high but realistic expectations for students along with vigorous instructional leadership. Becoming A Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkerson, 1985) called attention to the importance of high teacher expectations for optimal reading progress. If a teacher does not expect a student to learn, this message is conveyed to the student in many subtle, and some, not so subtle, ways. Thus, as pointed out by Cooper and Good (1983), self-fulfilling expectations cause negative changes in student performance. Likewise, low expectations tend to prevent positive changes in student performance. The power of teacher expectations to influence student learning cannot be minimized.

Even more importantly, the responses on the LD teacher survey indicated that 75% of the teachers spent less than 5% of class time in direct instruction of reading. With the research base that has been developed in support of the components of direct instruction (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986), it seemed reasonable to expect these procedures to be implemented by LD teachers in their classrooms.

In an effort to understand why the percentage of LD students meeting the standard on the BSAP sharply dropped at grade 6, as was shown in Table 2, structured interviews with 15 administrators and special education teachers were conducted. Table 2 was shown to them and the following question was asked: "What is the probable cause of the sharp drop in LD students' BSAP scores at grade 6?"

All of the explanations given seemed logical and seemed to indicate a possible cause of lowered test scores in the middle grades. The answers given by the educators are shown in Table 8. The most frequently given explanation was that the fourth- and fifth-grade students are not tested on the BSAP, and the skills tested are not emphasized at these grade levels. This seemed to imply that a sequential written curriculum was needed for all the grades. Likewise, explanations that test items did not require reading at the first-grade level and they did require reading skills at the upper levels had implications for this project because 10 of the educators gave reading deficiencies as an explanation of why sixth-grade LD students' BSAP scores dropped. The other two explanations (number two and number four) focused on specific learning disabilities as the explanation for the drop in scores. The teachers and administrators interviewed touched on a number of possible causes of underachievement in reading of middle-grade students.

Table 8

Explanations Given by Educators Why BSAP Scores of LD Students Drop at Grade 6

		N=15
	Explanation	*Number Giving Explanation
1.	BSAP tests are read to students at grade 1, many pictures and a very controlled vocabulary are used at the other primary levels; thus, students with reading problems can succeed.	10
2.	A great deal of emphasis is placed on teaching the format of the test at the primary levels where the students mark answers in the test booklets. However, beginning at the sixth-grade level, students bubble in the answers on a separate answer sheet. This transferring of answers to the answer sheet creates problems for LD students who have visual tracking difficulties.	8
3.	Students are not tested at the fourth- and fifth-grade levels; thus, these skills are not emphasized during this two-year interval. These LD students who need frequent reinforcement and more time-on-task to learn concepts get behind and never catch up again.	12
4.	The tests at the upper levels have more content, longer passages to read, multi-step exercises, and items requiring higher order thinking skills. Therefore, LD students with reading deficiencies are overwhelmed.	10
5.	Many LD students have attention deficit disorders, which make it extremely difficult for them to attend for the long period required to take the BSAP tests at the upper levels.	4

*Some gave more than one explanation

The lack of district adopted or approved instructional materials for special education classes was believed to contribute to poor reading achievement of LD middle-grade students. Resource and self-contained teachers had traditionally been free to select (with limited budgets) their own instructional materials. This had led to very little consistency of materials across the district. The reading curriculum was fragmented at best. The fragmentation of the reading program was verified by visitations to each classroom and an inventory of available instructional materials sent in by the special education teachers.

In a meeting on September 3, 1991, the special teachers of the target group were asked what materials were used in their classrooms to teach reading. Results of this poll are recorded in Table 9.

Table 9

Results of Survey of the Teachers of the Target Group

Teacher	Model	Age	Sex	Years Experience	LD Training	Area Certified	Reading Program in Use
A	SC	25	F	2	C	Elem.	New Class-No Reading Program
B	R	40	F	20	C	Elem.	Parts of Several
C	R	32	F	8	C	Elem.	Merrill Linguistics
D	R	38	F	14	C	Elem.	Whole Language Approach(Eclectic)
E	R	50	F	17	C	Elem.	Merrill Linguistics
F(1)	SC	40	F	16	C	Elem.	Whole Language Approach
F(2)	R	24	F	<1	P	Elem.	New Class-No Reading Program
G(1)	SC	34	F	11	C	Elem.	Merrill Linguistics
G(2)	R	36	F	14	P	Elem.	Merrill Linguistics

Legend: SC - Self-Contained, R - Resource, C - Certified, P - Permit from the State Department of Education to teach one year.

Two classes had just been organized, A and F(2). Both teachers were inexperienced with LD students. One teacher (F) was just out of college and was on a permit to teach LD resource. The other teacher had taught LD resource students for one year, but had just been placed in a self-contained class for LD students. Both of these teachers had no reading materials in their rooms and expressed no program preference.

Teachers who had been in the district for a while said that they used the Merrill Linguistic Program. This program was available through the State Department of Education, and the previous Director of Special Programs had encouraged its use. Two teachers had recently been to workshops on the whole-language approach to teaching reading and reported that they were using this approach with eclectic sources. One teacher said she pulled from several programs and used a variety of resources. The fragmentation of reading instruction across the district was evident.

Additional information about the teachers of the target group found in Table 9 indicates whether the teacher served in a resource (6) or self-contained (3) model classroom. The teachers' age, sex, years of experience, and primary area of certification are given. One teacher, mentioned earlier, is a beginning teacher on permit to teach LD resource students. All other teachers have had experience teaching LD students.

Regular education curriculum was primarily textbook driven in Chesterfield County. Other than the BSAP objectives, which were supposed to be used at all grade levels, no written curriculum guides were found. This is not unlike what was found in many districts in which curriculum audits have been conducted (English, 1987). As a member of a national audit team, English described a general lack of high quality functional curriculum in most school districts across the country. He pointed out the need for curriculum guides that are linked to the tests to be used for measuring progress. The curriculum guide should specify what is to be taught and how it is to be monitored. The fact that no curriculum guides were available was documented by the teacher survey (item two) shown in Appendix B.

A survey was done of principals, assistant principals, and curriculum coordinators. In addition, principals were asked to give surveys to five key teachers in their buildings. One hundred surveys were mailed, and 69 were returned. The responses to the first three questions are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Chesterfield County School District Educators' Survey Results, 1991

	N=69 Positive Responses
Pleased with standardized test scores	20%
More emphasis needed on study/information management	80%
The component most in need of strengthening:	
Collaborative Efforts Between Professionals	30%
Social Skills Instruction	23%
Study Skill/Learning Strategies Curriculum	40%
Parent Involvement	10%

The responses on the survey indicated that most people were not pleased with the standardized test scores of their school or district. The majority of the respondents wanted more emphasis on study skills and learning strategies. Almost one-third indicated a need for more collaboration between professionals. The last two items on the survey were open-ended and yielded diverse responses. The most frequently mentioned areas of need were a sequential, written curriculum and planning time for teachers. Less often mentioned problems were discipline, need of more instructional materials, improved facilities, and parent involvement (see Appendix C).

Inconsistency between instruction and the criteria used to measure progress (BSAP) was a possible cause of low reading achievement among learning disabled students. There seemed to be little consistency or continuity of curriculum from teacher to teacher or from year to year because teachers had no sequential curriculum guidelines. The IEP documents of the 56 students in the target group were analyzed for three elements: total number of IEP objectives, inclusion of BSAP reading objectives, and continuity of program from last year. An analysis of the data for target students are shown in the Appendixes as follows: Appendix D-grade 5, Appendix E-grade 6, Appendix F-grade 7, and Appendix G-grade 8. The total number of IEP objectives varied from 0 to 39 (one student's IEP had not been developed at the time of analysis). Because the IEP is developed by a committee based on the specific needs of the student, this variability in the number of objectives was expected. However, nine of the students had no BSAP reading objectives, and another seven students had only one BSAP reading objective. The mean number of BSAP objectives for all 56 students was 2. Given the fact that all of these students scored significantly (more than one standard deviation) below their ability levels in reading, it seemed that more emphasis should be placed on reading in their instructional programs. For example, student number 7 had a 41 standard score discrepancy between his estimated ability and measured reading achievement. Yet, his IEP had no BSAP reading objectives (see Appendix E).

The continuity of the IEPs was analyzed by looking at the number of objectives continued from 1990-1991 to 1991-1992. The number of objectives continued ranged from zero to four. The total group mean was one. This strongly indicated that there was little continuity of instruction from year to year. The fragmentation of instruction was determined to be a possible contributing cause of the students' poor performance on reading.

The analysis of the IEPs for the 56 target students showed a total of 582 objectives with only 2% reflecting objectives tested with BSAP. Realizing that special education is expected to provide specially designed instruction, it seemed reasonable to expect that a large part of the instruction for LD students should focus on basic reading skills such as decoding, word meanings, finding main ideas, making inferences, and analyzing literature. This should be especially true for students like those in the target group who have severe reading deficits.

Selection of objectives for the IEPs for students in special programs was intended to be done by a group process in a meeting of the IEP Committee. This committee usually consisted of the referring teacher, special teacher, school psychologist, principal, and parents. At the IEP meetings, the special teacher shared goals and objectives with the IEP Committee and asked for additions or deletions. Nine of 10 parents made no suggestions. Frequently, when regular teachers made suggestions, they were unrealistic. For example, if a sixth grade student who was reading at a third grade level was placed in a resource program, the sixth grade teacher frequently wanted the resource teacher to teach sixth grade subject matter to the student. Because the student's instructional level was at the third grade, it would be extremely frustrating to try to use sixth-grade materials. Therefore, the IEP goals and objectives were largely selected by the special teacher, and there were no written curriculum guides to provide continuity and consistency to the process.

In summary, the possible causes of low reading achievement of LD students in Chesterfield County School District were many. Data gathered from the setting indicated the following possible causes: (a) the specific learning disability itself, (b) low teacher expectation, (c) basic skills not consistently emphasized at all grade levels, (d) absence of sequential, written curriculum, (e) lack of adopted or approved instructional materials for special education classes, (f) fragmentation of the reading program, (g) need for more emphasis on study skills/learning strategies, (h) inconsistency between instruction and tests used to measure reading achievement, (i) lack of collaboration between regular and special education teachers, and (j) failure of IEP process and documents to include basic reading skills. Any one of the possible causes could lower the reading achievement of students. However, the presence of several (as seemed to be the case in Chesterfield) tended to magnify the problem. Of the possible causes, the writer considered the absence of appropriate curriculum, the fragmentation of the reading program due to the lack of an approved reading program for LD classes, and inconsistent and ineffective reading instruction to be the most detrimental to the reading progress of LD students. The research documenting possible causes will be discussed in the next section.

Literature Documenting the Problem and Possible Causes

The problem and possible cause of low reading achievement in the middle grades are well documented in the literature. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) identified problems and possible causes of reading underachievement. The report described reading as a very complex skill, which requires the integration of many different abilities before one becomes a smooth and efficient reader. The difficult task of learning to read can overwhelm students who have learning problems, are unmotivated, or have inadequate instruction. Early experiences in the home and school were emphasized as key factors in learning to read. Likewise, teacher competency and instructional skills were factors considered essential to reading achievement. High realistic expectations with maximum time spent on reading was considered to be of upmost importance in this national report.

The serious problem of reduced expectations for students who are placed in special programs was addressed by Graden, Zins, Curtis, and Cobb (1988). Lowered expectations for students who have been placed in special education have created a dual system in which regular education abdicated its responsibility for many students with learning problems, and special education became primarily responsible for the education of these students with special needs. This was true even for students who spent most of the day in regular education classes and who went to resource rooms for one or two periods a day. These authors stressed the need for alternatives to the present practices of labeling, lowering learning expectations for special students, and diminishing the responsibility of general education teachers for students with special needs.

Little (1982) indicated the lack of collaboration between special and regular teachers as a possible cause of low achievement. Discussed were the many benefits of frequent and consistent collaboration between teachers who share students. Students reap the benefit when their teachers share ideas and cooperate in activities. Regular and special educators must learn to share the responsibility of the education of students with special needs.

Similarly, Greer (1989) has argued that meeting the needs of the student must be the first and paramount goal of any collaborative efforts. According to Greer, the other benefits of collaboration will follow: (a) consolidation of resources, (b) improved interagency communication, (c) stronger linkages, and (d) accountability. Also, Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach (1985) said that handicapped students, who frequently require more repetition and reinforcement to master concepts, need the concerted efforts of the educators who share the responsibility of their instructional programs. Conflicting approaches lead to cognitive confusion and impede learning.

As indicated in the previous section, another possible cause of reading underachievement in Chesterfield County School District was the inconsistency between instruction and the criteria used to measure progress (BSAP). Much had been written in the literature about the importance of having alignment between the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum (English, 1987; Berliner, 1988; Glatthorn, 1987). The absence of curriculum guides as a possible cause of fragmentation and resulting underachievement was documented by these authors. Nothing in the school's environment moves teachers toward working together more than rudimentary pressure to move students along in a specified curriculum. The school culture is described as a mosaic of individualistic responses to teachers working in isolation unless a properly designed curriculum is used for continuity and program evaluation.

English (1987) stressed the importance of a written curriculum that is functional, specific, and directed to the needs of the students. In order for the written curriculum to be useful, it must be related to specified ends (outcomes). English further argued that considerable attention must be given to sequencing the curriculum to assure that the skills and knowledge required to demonstrate a desired level of competence on the test were acquired prior to testing time. In order for students to acquire these skills, the written curriculum must be followed and diligently taught. Thus, the students are tested on what has been taught. English believed that quality control within the school setting came from the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Likewise, Berliner (1988) pointed out that schools were vastly underestimating the students' performance by not aligning the taught and tested curriculum. The concept of academic learning time (ALT) was defined as the part of classroom time spent on curriculum content in which students are engaged and successful, and during which the activities or materials being used are related to outcomes valued by the school district. Berliner found that teachers who produced high levels of ALT in reading generally had students who scored higher on reading tests. He noted that when attempting to account for the variance of achievement after the entering ability of the student is partialled out, the variance is often well accounted for by ALT.

Glatthorn (1987) emphasized the importance of curriculum and instruction and the need to focus on the objectives that are essential for students. Careful structuring of skills and the day-to-day interactions between the students and teachers were stressed.

Glatthorn sorted out the types of curriculum: (a) recommended curriculum, (b) written curriculum, (c) taught curriculum, (d) supported curriculum, (e) tested curriculum, and (f) learned curriculum. He concluded that the most important curriculum was what the students actually learned. However, as was pointed out by Glatthorn, this is the one curriculum over which we have the least control. The tasks of curriculum leadership were described as using the right methods to bring the written, the taught, the supported, and the tested curriculums into closer alignment. By so doing, the learned curriculum will be maximized.

Likewise, Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters (1992) addressed the inconsistency between instruction and the tests used to measure reading achievement. Assuming that the test is valid and is assessing appropriate curriculum, congruence between the test and the curriculum is extremely important to improve student achievement. Instructional objectives must encompass the objectives tested on the instruments used to assess student progress. Lack of consistency between what is taught in the classroom and what is tested was considered to be related to poor reading achievement test scores.

The suggestion was made that the lack of adopted or approved instructional materials for special education classes was a possible cause. Rosenshine and Stevens, (1986) have researched the impact of materials used in the classroom and effective instruction. They report a high correlation between achievement and instructional strategies and materials. The research of Rosenshine and Stevens on teaching behavior and student achievement suggested that it is possible to specify the characteristics of both good instructional materials and good teaching.

The need for a consistent plan for teaching learning strategies to LD students was indicated and well documented in the literature. Sinclair and Ghory (1987) indicated that learning-disabled and other low-achieving students reach secondary grades without appropriate skills and strategies for success in mainstream classrooms. Moreover, little is done to teach low-achieving students the skills needed for success in mainstreamed classes. There is a lack of generalization of skills to mainstreamed classes. However, learning can be enhanced by the systematic use of key instructional principles such as the use of advance organizers, mnemonics, and structured reviews. Work at the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities resulted in the development of the Strategies Intervention Model (SIM). The primary emphasis is on teaching students how to learn and how to perform academic, social, or job-related tasks required to cope in the mainstream of life (Schumaker, Deshler, & Ellis, 1986).

The need for improvement in the IEPs of LD students was implicated as a possible cause of low reading achievement. Smith (1990) pointed to the widespread inadequacies and passive compliance of IEPs to ensure appropriate educational delivery. A call was made for reexamining the IEP process in general, particularly the document to determine if it really was congruent with what was taught, and what should be taught to the student with special needs. Smith made implications that, currently, IEPs may contribute to creating students with disabilities rather than helping them overcome their deficits.

Therefore, a review of the literature indicated the same concerns about the instructional program of special learners that the project manager had experienced in Chesterfield County School District. The problem and possible causes were well documented in the literature.

Chapter 2

Problem Setting

Demographic and Organization Characteristics

Chesterfield County is located in the South Carolina region known as the Sandhills. The county covers 793 square miles and varies from flat terrain to rolling hills. Geographically, it is one of the largest counties in the state, but its population of 40,000 makes it the 26th in size. The county is divided into the following small-town communities: Cheraw, Ruby, Pageland, Jefferson, McBee, Patrick, and Chesterfield.

Traditionally, Chesterfield's economy relied almost exclusively on agriculture. Presently, a mixture of agriculture and industry provides the economic base for the county. Major crops are peaches, cotton, and soybeans. Timber and poultry provide income for a number of county residents, also.

Recently, industrial growth brought a welcome boost to the economy. New and expanded industrial investment, between 1976 and 1990, represented over $262 million and 4,500 new jobs. Per capita income grew an average of about 48% during that period (Chesterfield School District, 1990).

However, at the time of this project, the county continued to be very rural with many disadvantaged families. Over 78% of the population was considered rural. Of the adult population (18 years and over), 56% had less than a high school education. Over 21% of the households were headed by a single parent who was usually a female. Approximately 18% of the families with children under 17 years of age were below the poverty level. The pregnancy rate among females 14 to 17 years of age was approximately 5 in 100. The ethnic makeup was 61% white and 39% nonwhite (South Carolina Department of Education, 1991).

The site of the project, Chesterfield County School District, was 1 of 91 districts in the state of South Carolina. The 16 schools of the district were spread throughout the large county, and the school district was coextensive with the county. Educational opportunities for approximately 8,000 students were provided in preschool through grade 12 programs. The district operates four comprehensive high schools, three junior/middle schools, and nine elementary schools.

All district schools were accredited by the South Carolina Department of Education and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The district employed approximately 500 professional staff and 300 support personnel who provided a variety of educational programs to meet the needs of its diverse learners. The following programs were offered district-wide: preschool through grade 12 regular education programs, Chapter I, Education Improvement Act (EIA) remedial/compensatory, gifted and talented, vocational education, advanced placement, adult education, and special education.

The mission statement of the district indicated its somewhat idealistic educational philosophy: "The Chesterfield County Board of Education provides an environment designed to meet the needs of all eligible students insuring the opportunity for a quality education" (Chesterfield County School District, 1990, p. 1). Records indicated that the nine member school board had legal authority for the operations of the district schools and had final control over school matters within a framework set by the State Legislature and State Board of Education. Consistent with its philosophy, Chesterfield County School District tried to meet the educational needs of most students and had made steady progress toward this goal since the mid-80s.

In addition to the appointed Superintendent of Education, the district administration was composed of three assistant superintendents plus the directors and coordinators of various programs. The writer served as Coordinator of

Psycholeducational Services and was supervised by the Director of Exceptional Education Services.

The national school-reform movement gave impetus to important state legislation mandating changes in education, which had significant impact on South Carolina school districts including Chesterfield County. Commitment to educational reform was demonstrated when the South Carolina Legislature established the BSAP (Basic Skills Assessment Program Act, 1978) and the EIA (Education Improvement Act, 1984). This legislation provided monetary incentives to individual teachers and schools for improved performance on statewide tests and increased student attendance. With marked improvement, schools can earn deregulation status which means they do not have to strictly adhere to the rules and regulations of the state programs. Since 1984, the Chesterfield County School District has seen an increase in the number of non handicapped students meeting minimum standards.

Since the passage of the EIA, concerted efforts have been made in the district to meet and surpass state standards for education. The staff and teachers of the county have been trained in the Program for Effective Teaching (PET), Higher Order Thinking Skills, and Cooperative Learning in order to develop skills for improving instructional programs. Following PET training, teachers are observed and coached in the use of the instructional skills of the program. In addition to staff-development opportunities, the district offers college courses for teachers to upgrade their skills and certification. Improvement in instructional programs resulted in generally higher performance for the district on statewide test scores. However, the mildly handicapped students did not show the improvement in test performance that regular education students showed.

The Chesterfield County School District Plan for Serving Disabled Students (1991b) indicated that special education was delivered in a continuum of service delivery models for over 800 students who had been identified as handicapped.

The continuum of services were available from itinerant programs (speech and support services such as occupational therapy) to residential placement for the most severely handicapped. The service delivery models following a continuum from the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the most restrictive are as follows: (a) Itinerant Model in which the students are seen on a weekly or biweekly basis by the specialists, (b) Resource Model in which students are served one or two periods a day by the special education teacher, (c) Self-contained Model in which the students stay in the special education class for the major part of the day, and (d) the Residential Model in which the student is physically removed from the school, placed in a residential setting, and provided with full-time special care.

In 1991, Chesterfield County School District served nearly 80% of the handicapped population in resource programs for the mildly handicapped. The resource students spent most of the day in the regular classroom and went to the resource room for specialized help. These resource programs met the legal requirements of the LRE because the eligible student was educated with his non handicapped peers for the major part of the day. Each school in the district had at least one resource room.

A large majority (approximately 90%) of the resource students were classified as learning disabled. Learning-disabled students have at least average intelligence yet demonstrate a severe discrepancy between academic achievement and estimated ability. In 1991, Chesterfield County School District served 31 of the more severely learning-disabled students in self-contained classrooms where they received most of their instruction from certified LD teachers. Some were mainstreamed into regular classes for one or two periods daily. The LD self-contained classes were strategically located in four schools in the district.

Certified special education teachers and support personnel provided the instruction for students in special programs for different handicapping conditions ranging from mild to severe. The following programs were provided in Chesterfield County School District: (a) learning disabled, (b) speech and language impaired, (c) visually handicapped, (d) hearing impaired, (e) emotionally/behaviorally disordered, (f) educable mentally handicapped, (g) trainable mentally handicapped, (h) profound and severe mentally handicapped, and (i) orthopedically and other health impaired.

Each school had a Special Education Review Team (SERT), which was designed to function as a screening committee for special services referrals and to provide support for handicapped students and their teachers. The SERT was usually made up of the counselor, a regular teacher, a special teacher, and the principal. When a regular teacher referred a student for special services, the initial step was to refer the student to the SERT. Parents were notified and conferences were held. Observations were done in the regular classroom setting and screening instruments were administered. Interventions were suggested and tried before a referral was made to Special Services for a psychoeducational evaluation. Following the psychoeducational evaluation, a meeting with the SERT, the school psychologist, and the parents (when they came) was held to plan the student's instructional program.

The Special Services Department, of which this project manager was a part, had the following primary responsibilities in the school district: (a) identification of eligible students through psychoeducational assessment, (b) participation in placement IEP meetings for eligible students, (c) consultation with parents/teachers, (d) development and implementation of the curriculum, and (e) administration of programs including monitoring of the procedures to ensure adherence to the state and federal guidelines programs for the handicapped.

The problem setting for this MARP was the special classrooms in the Chesterfield County School District, which served LD students. Students for the project were students from grades 5 through 8 who were selected by their special teachers because they had severe reading problems. The 56 students selected by nine teachers came from both resource (61%) and self-contained (39%) program models. All the students were considered mildly handicapped because they receive part of their instruction in the mainstream of general education. The students came from seven schools located in six different attendance areas across the county. Thus, the problem setting for this MARP, designed to improve reading achievement of mildly handicapped students, was district-wide and had implications for all LD students in the district, especially those in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Culture of the Community, School District and Schools

Chesterfield County is located approximately 100 miles from the beautiful Atlantic Ocean beaches to the east, just a few miles south of North Carolina, and 85 miles north of Columbia, the capital city of the Palmetto State. Its location allows for the comfort of country life while having all that a city has to offer just a few miles away. Several large cities are within easy driving distance. Also, the picturesque Appalachian Mountains are only about three hours away. The lifestyle of some of the more wealthy residents includes second homes either at the beach or in the mountains.

Like its neighboring counties, York and Lancaster, Chesterfield County probably got its name from the Pennsylvania towns so familiar to the early settlers. Many evidences of the county's rich history remain in the array of historic buildings and antebellum homes. Obtained from the British government through a large land grant in 1730, the area was an uninhabited wilderness. Soon English, Scotch, and Irish families came down the Great Wagon Road from the northern colonies to settle in the area bordered by the Pee Dee and Lynches Rivers.

Chesterfield County can boast of a relative temperate climate with typically mild winters, warm springs, hot summers, and Indian summers that linger. Its vast forests and fresh water ponds provide an abundance of opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature studies.

Chesterfield County is composed of small, rural, farm communities where the old-fashioned work ethic is still prevalent. The friendly hospitality of its generous people is one of its greatest resources. The small towns, which make up the county, vary in the degree of support they provide to their community schools. For example, in one community, the parents are very active in projects that provide resources for the school. However, few parents at other schools of the district are involved in the Parent-Teacher Association.

Chesterfield County School District is not atypical of most southern rural districts. The rituals, mores, relationships, and problems are similar to those of other school districts in South Carolina, and without doubt, throughout the southeast. Some of the schools have outstanding records of achievement. These schools receive state recognition through School Incentive Awards and Deregulated Status by the State Department of Education. Three schools enjoyed Deregulated Status during the 1990-1991 school year, which allowed them to experiment with innovative educational ideas without state restrictions. Over $100,000 in School Incentive Rewards were received by district schools, and 48 teachers earned state Teacher Incentive Awards for improvements in test scores, student attendance, and teacher attendance.

When this project began, the district administration had been stable since 1984. Strong leadership and good judgement had set the stage for steady and unprecedented growth. A progressive building program was underway. Substantial improvements at all schools were made, and new buildings had been erected on a number of campuses. The district was getting ready for Phase II of the Building and Renovation Plan (see Board Report, Appendix H). The people had pride in their schools, and it showed.

Clearly stated goals were an important part of the school district's culture. The yearly improvement reports explicitly stated outcome goals for the district along with needs-assessment information used as a basis for goal setting. Also, evaluative information concerning the improvement efforts were presented. If the goals were not met, reasons were explored and goals were reconsidered for the next year.

Educational advisory councils to work on the improvement plan for the district each year were elected by the general population representing each attendance area of the county. This advisory board considered the most recent recommendations of accrediting agencies, standardized test results, concerns expressed by citizens addressing the Board of Education during designated times at monthly board meetings, and input from the district administration. Questionnaires completed by teachers, parents, and students were reviewed and used in developing improvement plans. Thus, the development of the district's goals was a shared enterprise by many different people each year.

In addition, each school in the district had its own advisory council, which developed the goals for the school. Because each school in the district was unique, its goals needed to reflect that uniqueness. The advisory council of the school ensured that there was a sharing of goal setting efforts.

The seven schools selected for this MARP all had relatively strong leadership. They had clearly stated goals developed by their schools' advisory councils. Thus, the culture of the schools was largely positive and beneficial to the majority of the students. However, the way things were done district-wide may have been counter productive for a small minority--the LD population. The fact that these mildly handicapped students consistently fell further behind their peers in reading appeared to support this.

Internal Influences of Potential Impact on Intervention

From the beginning, several potentially positive influences were present within the Chesterfield County School District. The strong move within the district to improve the academic achievement of all students had the potential to strengthen the efforts to improve reading achievement among the learning disabled. This MARP was in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the school district, which pledged to meet the needs of all students and to provide the opportunity for a quality education for all.

The commitment and support from the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, and the Director of Special Services were extremely beneficial to the success of this MARP. These three administrators served as observers for this MARP. They provided the encouragement and resources needed to improve the curriculum and instruction for the learning-disabled students of the target group.

The cooperation of principals and teachers contributed to the success of this project. It was necessary for principals to allow release time for teachers during the school day to work on the curriculum. Also, teachers gave some of their own time. This cooperative effort greatly facilitated the project's success.

The district was committed to training teachers in more effective ways of teaching and of relating to students. Teachers were trained each year in Madeline Hunter's Program for Effective Teaching (PET) and in Cooperative Learning as ongoing staff development programs. In addition, the Staff Development Coordinator planned outstanding conferences to train the teachers and staff of the district.

However, there were some potentially hindering factors within the school district at the onset of the project. Ironically, the school-improvement movement within the district was seen as possibly having an adverse effect on the number of students participating in BSAP. Because there was pressure to raise overall achievement scores in the district, it was feared some principals and teachers would recommend to the SERT that more LD students not participate in the statewide testing. Because these students tended to be in the bottom quartile, some teachers and administrators had expressed belief that they could raise their school or class ranking by allowing fewer handicapped students to participate in the testing program. The MARP manager guarded against this happening by attending each annual review and IEP meeting of the targeted students.

Teacher turnover was anticipated to be a hindering factor to this MARP. Although turnover had not been a problem in Chesterfield County School District, two of the teachers in the project were on permits to teach LD for the 1991-1992 school year. If for some reason, they did not get at least six semester hours training in LD education, they would not be able to continue teaching in that position. Once the teachers were trained in the techniques of the intervention strategies, it required orientation and additional training of new teachers when teachers left the project.

The sluggish economy was a potential constraining factor. Funds for instructional materials and staff development were essential to the success and maximum effectiveness of the project. The cost of printing the curriculum, instructional materials for a new reading program, and training for the teachers required financial support in economically hard times.

The large geographical area of the district made it difficult to bring teachers together for afternoon meetings. Because schools were as much as 40 miles apart, a two-hour meeting extended to four hours counting travel time.

External Influences of Potential Impact on Intervention

Potentially helping factors to increase the reading achievement of LD students were found outside the school district, also. The national and state reform movements were calling for schools to move all students to higher levels of achievement. The National Goals were strongly endorsed by South Carolina. Governor Carroll Campbell had been one of the leaders on the National Goals Panel.

Since all of the negative press, during 1991-1992, about the way American students compared to Japanese and other foreign students, educational achievement has been the topic of focus by politicians, community leaders, and parents. It was believed that if they were serious about improving the achievement of American students, the resources and support needed to accomplish this task would be provided. Consequently, this MARP would be facilitated.

The newly elected South Carolina Superintendent of Education strongly supported the Regular Education Initiative (REI) concept and called for steps to be taken to encourage inclusion of the mildly handicapped students into regular education classes with less "pull out" programs. This was seen as facilitative to some of the strategies of the MARP.

Also, parents of LD students were becoming more involved in issues which affect the education of their children as evidenced by their presence at board meetings in the fall of 1991. However, more parent involvement was needed and was encouraged. Parent support was essential for this project to achieve maximum success.

Unfortunately, there were also potentially hindering external factors for this project. The national economic recession was anticipated to have a constraining influence in that budget cuts were expected to reduce federal funds for programs for the handicapped. State budget cuts had the potential to hamper the project because the state provided funds for most of the schools' instructional materials. Although the economic recession of the early 90s was a potential constraining force, it was not expected to have a major influence.

The large number of parents in Chesterfield County who are undereducated was a constraining factor. Many homes had very little reading materials in them because the parents did not read. Students did not receive the quality help they needed to become better readers because their parents did not have the skills necessary to assist them.

As mentioned before, the lack of parent involvement in the schools tended to hinder the success of this MARP. Because parents were needed to provide the encouragement for LD students, they needed to participate in conferences, open-house programs, and other activities designed to help them to understand their LD child's difficulty in learning to read.

Documentation from the Setting and Related Literature

Patterson, Purkey, and Parker (1986) suggested that school culture affects the behavior and achievement of students. It is created and can be manipulated by people to either help or hinder a cause. Although different aspects of the culture can exert influence for better or worse over a student, it is the entire school culture that is most influential. These authors provided the characteristics of a healthy school culture. Some of these have already been mentioned in describing the culture of Chesterfield County School District. Shared decision making, strong leadership, well-planned staff development, and clear goals are among the characteristics given. These described the Chesterfield County School District, also.

The lack of parental education and involvement was indicated as a possible hindering factor to this MARP. Chesterfield County School District, with 56.3% of its population having less than a high school education, is at a disadvantage. Research has clearly shown that the curriculum of the home is important to developing reading skills and habits. Bennett (1987) discussed the importance of parents being partners in educational productivity. When parents read, talk, and listen to their children, the children read better. By becoming involved, parents of disadvantaged children can help their children do as well in school as the more affluent children.

In the publication by the United States Department of Education (1991), America 2000: An Education Strategy, the ambitious National Education Goals adopted by President Bush and the governors were thoroughly discussed. The long-range strategies were to move every American community toward those goals. All six National Education

Goals were related to this MARP, which was designed to improve reading achievement of LD students. However, Goals Two and Five were especially relevant to this project. Goal Two called for the high school graduation rate to increase to 90%. If that is to happen by 2000, intervention strategies such as those used in this MARP needed to be expanded and utilized throughout Chesterfield County School District. Goal Five projects that every adult American will be able to read and will possess the information and skills needed to compete in a global economy. Also, Americans will be expected to exercise the right and responsibilities of citizenship. The 56 LD students of this MARP were in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, and yet, they were still reading at the primary level. With successful intervention, they will be literate and graduate from high school before 2000. Based on the success of this project, the reading program will be expanded to all LD classes in Chesterfield County School District.

Although the national education goals are certainly ambitious, they are worthy ones, which are greatly needed in rural Chesterfield County where so many of the residents are undereducated. As educators continue educational reform, it is hoped that we can increase literacy and the graduation rate for students. By so doing, the number of residents below the poverty line will decrease because education is the best weapon against poverty. As educational levels increase, so do earnings. The entire community will benefit. This project, which was designed to improve reading achievement of LD students, was a small but important part of this vast endeavor.

Chapter 3

Literature

General Problem Area Description and Analysis

Reading achievement for LD students in Chesterfield County School District was extremely low. Some of the target group for this project were still at the first grade level; all of the target students were placed at grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, but they were reading at the primary levels. Reading is probably the most important skill learned in school because deciphering the printed word is needed in essentially all other areas. Anderson et al. (1985) explained that failure in learning to read is not fun, and the apathy that goes with failure in this basic skill shows in these poor readers.

Gerber and Donnerstein (1989) stated that probably the most succinct rationale for disciplined research in special education was given in 1802 by Jean Marc Gaspard Itad in the now classic The Wild Boy of Aveyron:

> It is not among outstanding and gifted individuals. . .that we should look for the benefits and disadvantages of our routine education [sic] but among those that this same education has barely shaped. . . . These gaps or these faults of the human mind are much more the result [sic] than we realize [sic] of the defective management of education, whose principal fault is that it is essentially the same for all children and never adapted to the innumerable variations in the intellectual makeup of individuals. (p. 26)

Profound questions are raised concerning the efficacy of special education in light of the educational reform movement, which ushered in the 1990s. Surely, the LD students comprising the target group of this project, who ranged in age from 10 to 15, had been "barely shaped" so far as reading education was concerned. Even though they had been diagnosed as having a learning disability, they had the ability to learn, and with the appropriate "management of education" they were expected to improve in reading.

The Tenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), covering 1986-1987, was reviewed by Gerber and Donnerstein (1989). These authors stated that despite the progress made in efforts to educate the handicapped, there was still reason for concern. No real answers were given in the report but the following additional profound questions about education were raised by Gerber and Donnerstein: "What is teaching?", "Are handicapping conditions within the children or in the interplay between children and educational circumstances?" (p. 26). This MARP made an attempt to find some satisfactory answers to these questions.

Because there was no written curriculum for teaching basic skills in Chesterfield County School District's special programs, this was considered a top priority intervention. The goals of this project were as follows: (a) to develop and implement a basic skills curriculum with an emphasis on reading in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, (b) to train teachers in direct instruction techniques, (c) to implement a new reading program (Corrective Reading) which used the direct instruction approach, (d) to ensure that the recommended strategies and techniques were being consistently used, and (e) to involve parents in the education of the students.

The project sought answers to the following questions: (a) what is a good sequential reading curriculum for LD students?, (b) will consistency and continuity of instruction increase reading achievement of middle-grade learning-disabled students?, (c) are direct instruction techniques effective with low achieving LD students?, and (d) can discouraged parents become involved with the schools and, thereby, raise the achievement level of their children?

Solution Possibilities

The need for a written curriculum guide to help provide some consistency and continuity in special education programs in Chesterfield County School District was established in chapter 1 of this paper. English (1987) pointed out the importance of functional curriculum guides which are linked to the measurement used and which specify what is to be taught (outcomes), and how instruction is to be monitored. The curriculum was believed to be the one tool that could be used to create a workable system from the fragmented instruction of special education. The curriculum had to be connected to management if it were to improve its capability to become a more effective tool to foster greater pupil achievement.

As a possible solution to the underachievement of LD students in reading, the teachers of these students developed the curriculum and aligned it to the BSAP, which was used to determine promotion and graduation standards. Congruence between assessment and curriculum was seen as essential if student achievement was to show improvement. Instruction needed to encompass the objectives tested on the instruments used to assess student progress (Herman, et al. 1992).

The curriculum was based on the basic skills as identified by a cross-section of educators and community leaders. The basic skills were identified as those skills needed to be a successful student and included the following areas: (a) readiness skills; (b) decoding and word meaning; (c) details; (d) main idea; (e) reference usage; (f) inference; (g) critical analysis; (h) mathematical concepts; (i) math operations; (j) geometry; (k) measurement; (l) problem solving; (m) fraction concepts; (n) graph concepts; (o) decimal, ratio, and percent; (p) word usage; (q) language mechanics; (r) handwriting; (s) spelling; (t) written expression; and (u) classroom success.

The benefits of the whole language philosophy for literacy education were carefully considered. Whole language places emphasis on flexibility in materials and activities, on student and teacher choice, and on viewing each child as an individual rather than a fifth grader (Watson, 1989). Teachers and students who felt regimented and bound by basal readers have been freed by whole language to explore literacy (Harste, 1989). Whole language classrooms have focused attention on the rich resources of children's literature. More time is devoted to recreational reading. Teachers read more to children, and children read more themselves in whole language classrooms (Shulz, 1991).

Although whole language has much to contribute to literacy education for the regular classroom, it was found that many of the programs for learning disabled students already had flexibility in materials and activities recommended by whole language advocates. Yet, the students continued to get further behind in reading skills. Spiegel (1992) found that low aptitude children and students with impoverished literacy backgrounds were unlikely to figure out effective strategies all by themselves, and there was evidence that high error rates correlated negatively with reading achievement.

Yatvin (1991) warned that without a schoolwide program "that ensures a rational and orderly distribution of content and materials over the grades" (p. 1), anarchy may result as each teacher follows his or her own curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum task force recommended the use of the direct-instruction approach, which was based on identified basic skills goals and objectives. Activities were designed to specifically teach strategies to meet the goals.

An extensive body of research indicated that clearly defined objectives and teacher-directed instruction are characteristics of effective reading programs (Adams, 1990; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). This research indicated that learning is more likely to occur if students know what the learning tasks are and if teachers specifically teach them. In direct instruction, students and teacher are focused on what is to be learned; students are made aware of why it is important to learn the task; and students are explicitly taught how to do a particular process through teacher modeling and explanation (Spiegel, 1992). The lesson is not considered complete until the students can use the strategy with new materials for authentic purposes.

Morgan and Jenson (1988) found that most special education children had deficits in basic reading areas. Without reading skills, these children will fail when placed into regular education settings. Further, Morgan and Jenson stated that the best models to teach academic skills to special learners have been developed at the University of Oregon and use a direct-instruction approach to teaching (Engelmann, Hanner, & Johnson, 1989). Corrective Reading was found to be particularly effective in teaching hard-to-teach middle-grade students. Corrective Reading, a fast paced program which reduces guessing and error production, was selected as the core reading program to be used with the LD students in this project.

Gersten and Keating (1987) reported their research on the effectiveness of the principles of direct instruction. Significantly improved achievement was recorded when small groups of at-risk students were taught using scripted lessons, motivating procedures, and frequent feedback. These techniques of direct instruction produced long-term results according to these authors.

Englemann, Becker, Carnine, and Gersten (1988) reported on the Follow Through Studies (a large, federally funded, early intervention program for disadvantaged children), which used the Direct Instruction Model. The major objective of the experimental study was to determine which programs were most effective in bringing the achievement levels of disadvantaged students up to the national median. There were nine major programs used in the study. Direct Instruction was the only model that showed consistently positive outcomes across all measures. The students using the Direct Instruction approach achieved well, not only in the basic skills, but in cognitive and affective skills, as well. The two major features of the Direct Instruction Model were: (a) teach more in less time, and (b) control the details of what happened.

Another study using the Direct Instruction Model was done in Williamsburg County in South Carolina, which is very rural and disadvantaged. Therefore, this school improvement research has relevance for this MARP. Darch, Gersten, and Taylor (1987) reported that the performance of 600 students using the direct instruction techniques was contrasted with the performance of similar students using other approaches, which were routinely used in the school district. Students were compared on: (a) standardized tests of academic achievement, (b) the South Carolina BSAP, and (c) retention rates at the end of grade 12. Results showed that the direct-instruction group scored significantly higher than the comparison groups on every measure. Moreover, the level of achievement was maintained over a seven-year period. The direct-instruction group continued to score close to grade level at the end of the longitudinal study.

Darch et al. (1987) described the techniques of direct instruction, which uses strategies that are found to be effective with problematic learners. The strategies and techniques, which were based on research for maximizing achievement growth, are as follows: (a) teaching to mastery; (b) explicit, step-by-step modeling of strategies; (c) systematic correction procedures; (d) frequent use of unison group responses; (e) positive reinforcement; and (f) clear statement of rules and procedures.

Polloway, Epstein, Polloway, Patton, and Ball (1986) used the Corrective Reading Program, which incorporated the strategies and techniques of direct instruction, with a group of LD and educable mentally handicapped (EMH) adolescents. When compared to reading progress made in prior years, both the LD and mildly mentally handicapped students showed significant gains. The group had experienced virtually no improvement (a mean growth of one month) in their reading skills in the year prior to program initiation. However, during the year of Corrective Reading decoding instruction, a mean change of approximately one-half year in reading recognition and reading comprehension occurred. The teachers' observations of the degree of skill acquisition supported that the students had made substantial gains. The progress in reading for these students was viewed as educationally relevant.

Polloway et al. (1986) were concerned with the possible relationship between the effectiveness of the Corrective Reading Program and the category of handicapping condition (LD and EMH). Anecdotal reports from the staff had indicated that the Corrective Reading Program was more effective with LD students than with EMH students. An analysis of the data confirmed that LD students made significantly greater gains. The mean achievement gains for students identified as learning disabled were in excess of .73 and .64 years for recognition and comprehension, respectively. The change in the EMH students' reading progress was .31 years for recognition and .34 years for comprehension. It was clear that both groups profited from participation in Corrective Reading and the direct-instruction strategies.

One of the greatest obstacles to teaching LD adolescents to read has been the relative lack of appropriate curricula for this population. However, Corrective Reading was specifically designed by Engelmann, Hanner, and Johnson (1989) for older students who continued to have difficulties in basic reading skills. The Corrective Reading Program is based on the same principles as the direct-instruction methods, which were successful with disadvantaged learners in the Project Follow Through Studies of Englemann et al. (1988). The Direct Instruction System for Teaching and Remediation (DISTAR) developed by Englemann and associates for the young disadvantaged students produced significant gains in academic skills. Becker (1984) predicted that the implementation of the direct-instruction mode would result in children from low income homes achieving at levels congruent with the national norms.

Although more studies were found in the literature on the DISTAR programs, which were designed for the young child, there were a few additional studies, which indicated that the Corrective Reading Program (CRP) was very successful in improving the reading skills for older special learners. Gerston, Brockway, and Henares (1983) showed positive results using the CRP with upper elementary students who were learning English as a second language. Holdsworth (1985); Becker (1984); and Lloyd, Epstein, and Cullinan (1981) investigated the effectiveness of CRP with special education adolescents. The direct-instruction methodology and the CRP produced significantly higher scores on measures of reading and language skills than the other methods of teaching reading in each study. Although the CRP shows promise as an effective reading program with handicapped learners, the literature calls for more research with adolescent students with special needs (Polloway, et al., 1986).

Over-reliance on individualized, fragmented instruction instead of small group, direct instruction in Chesterfield County School District had been indicated as a possible cause of poor achievement. The Corrective Reading Program in conjunction with direct instruction was believed to be a possible deterrent to the poor reading achievement of LD students. Research had indicated that when teachers explained exactly what students were expected to learn, and when teachers demonstrated the steps needed to accomplish the particular task, students learned more. Therefore, the technique of direct instruction was utilized to improve the reading achievement of the target students of this MARP. Teachers were trained to use the strategies and techniques of direct instruction and the Corrective Reading Program during the fall of 1991.

Following its development, the curriculum was used as a pilot program. The curriculum guide was used during May 1992, to develop IEPs for 1992-1993. In addition to having a sequential curriculum for basic skills from which to develop the IEP, special training in the development of IEPs using the curriculum was conducted during April 1992. As had been recommended by Smith (1990), there was a reexamination of the IEP process and the document itself to determine its effectiveness as a tool for accountability, parental involvement, communication, and planning. Teachers were trained to identify critical skills for learning to read, and these were included on the IEP of each student.

Collaboration between the regular education teachers and the special education teachers who shared students had been sparse in Chesterfield County School District. When students were mainstreamed for one or more periods a day, it was important for the teachers who shared these students to consistently collaborate about the LD students. These students, who frequently required more repetition, time on task, and reinforcement to master concepts, needed the concerted efforts of the educators who shared the responsibility of their instructional programs. Conflicting approaches had led to cognitive confusion and impeded learning (Johnston, Allington, & Afflerbach, 1985).

Little (1982) said that it was the students who benefited when their teachers shared ideas and cooperated with each other. Teachers were encouraged to support each other by discussing common needs, sharing instructional strategies, and using their creativity in problem solving. Regularly scheduled meetings provided a forum where teachers could share their skills and knowledge and help each other cope with the problems presented by these students with special needs. As a part of this project, the participating teachers developed plans for collaboration with regular education teachers who had the target students for one or more periods each day.

Walberg (1984) emphasized the importance of the home-school partnership in maximizing the success of student learning. The author found that parental involvement helped children learn more effectively. Walberg emphasized that it took more than an occasional conference to get the job done. Parents, especially undereducated parents, need specific suggestions of activities they can use with their children (i.e., listen to the child read, and call spelling words out each week). Teachers who were successful at involving parents in their children's schoolwork found that student achievement improved. Therefore, one of the strategies to improve reading achievement of LD students in Chesterfield County School District was to get parents involved in their children's education.

The parent-involvement component of the project drew heavily from the work of Canter and Canter (1991). This comprehensive, parent-involvement program for teachers entitled, Parents On Your Side, focused on effective attitudes, positive communication with parents, problem solving strategies, and contracts between the home and school. Through video tapes and study guides, teachers learned the techniques of getting positive parent involvement with education of students. This program encouraged parents to use Power Reading with their children. Power Reading is a technique for increasing reading and listening comprehension and takes only about 15 minutes per day. The parent reads to the child and listens to the child read, then questions the child about the material that was read. It has at least four positive outcomes: (a) students see parents reading, (b) students read more, (c) students learn to listen in order to answer questions, and (d) parent and child spend quality time together.

Canter and Canter recommended that parents use the following strategies to help their children be more successful in school: (a) use the Power Reading technique; (b) designate a regular study area; (c) create a homework survival kit, which contains supplies for doing homework (i.e., pencils, paper, erasers, dictionary); and (d) schedule a daily homework time. In addition, parents are encouraged to provide motivation and positive reinforcement for the students. The project manager and teachers of the target students trained parents to use the recommended strategies.

Conceptualization

The primary evidence of the problem showed that 80% of the eighth-grade LD students in Chesterfield County School District scored below the standard on the 1991 South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP). On individually administered reading tests, LD students in grades 5 through 8 consistently performed from two to six grade levels below grade placement and scored from one to four standard deviations below estimated ability. Research studies had indicated the following solution strategies: (a) developing and using a sequential functional curriculum aligned to the testing instrument; (b) using the IEP process to promote effective instruction, communication among teachers who share the students, and parent involvement; (c) encouraging collaboration between regular and special education teachers, (d) implementing techniques of direct instruction and the Corrective Reading Program; and (e) winning parents over as partners in education. These strategies were utilized to improve the reading achievement of the targeted students.

Chapter 4

Methods for Discrepancy Reduction and Educational Change

Solution Strategy

The literature-based plan of intervention strategies to help improve the reading achievement of 56 learning-disabled middle-grade students in Chesterfield County School District included the following: (a) organization and training of the Basic Skills Curriculum Task Force, (b) development of the basic skills curriculum, (c) staff development in direct-instruction techniques and in the Corrective Reading Program, (d) monthly observations in the classrooms with feedback provided to the teachers concerning their use of the direct-instruction model, (e) implementation of the new reading program using direct-instruction techniques, (f) field testing the basic skills curriculum in developing the IEPs, and (g) implementation of strategies to involve parents. Research indicated that these components had been found to be effective in improving achievement.

Implementation Design

A task force made up of teachers of LD students was selected to develop the basic skills curriculum for learning-disabled students. Four of the nine teachers taught students in the target group. The other four teachers were selected because of their special strengths in providing instruction for LD students. The group participated in a training program in curriculum development, which drew heavily from the ideas of F. English (1987). Following training, this task force met weekly to develop the curriculum, which included: (a) belief statements, (b) scope and sequence, (c) goals and objectives, and (d) suggested activities and materials.

After the basic skills curriculum was developed in draft form, it was field tested by the nine teachers who were participating in the project and nine other teachers who taught LD students in the district. The goals and objectives were used in developing the 1992-1993 IEPs for the target students. Teachers were asked to add to the activities and resources as they worked with the curriculum during the 1992-1993 school year.

Direct-instruction programs have been found effective for students identified as mildly handicapped (Darch et al., 1987). This model emphasized teaching specific objectives and increased time on task. The goal was to increase the probability of student learning as a consequence of direct, effective, teaching techniques. The following components of the direct-instruction model were used: (a) pretested, scripted lessons, (b) teacher-directed, small group instruction; and (c) teaching procedures featuring increased time allocated to reading instruction, frequent student responses, appropriate feedback, and adequate provisions for practice.

The empirical evidence that lower performing students achieve more when given intensive, highly structured, direct instruction led to the adoption of the Corrective Reading Program, developed by Engelmann, Hanner, and Johnson (1989), for use with the target students in this project. The Corrective Reading Program was specifically designed for middle-grade students who have not learned in other programs and who do not learn on their own.

The teachers were trained in the use of the direct-instruction techniques and the Corrective Reading Program. This involved eight hours of intensive training with follow-up sessions as needed. The implementation of Corrective Reading was monitored by the project manager using regular classroom observations and conferences with the teachers. The project manager had become a trainer in the Corrective Reading Program in preparation for the project.

Parent involvement was believed to be important to improving the reading achievement of the target students. Bennett (1987) pointed out that parental involvement helps children learn more effectively. When parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education, the probability of success is increased. Therefore, parent involvement activities were developed and implemented.

Implementation History-Phase One

The data-gathering phase of this new-position research project took place in August and September 1991. These data had provided a broad-based knowledge of the writer's new position and school district. It was immediately obvious that there was no shortage in problems which needed to be solved. However, the project manager quickly decided that improving the deplorably low reading skills of middle-grade students with learning disabilities was the most interesting challenge of the Exceptional Education Services Department. The writer had long been fascinated with the achievement, or lack of it, of LD students. The study of improvement in achievement was well within the realm of the responsibilities of the new position as school psychologist. Therefore, developing strategies for improving the reading achievement of LD students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 became the focus of this research project.

A large majority of the students with learning disabilities in Chesterfield County School District were unable to meet the basic skills standards set by the state of South Carolina. Even though the students were in special LD programs, they continued to fall further behind their nonhandicapped peers. In early September 1991, a survey of reading programs and materials being used in the LD classes indicated that there was little consistency and much fragmentation in the reading programs across the district. Because there were no written curriculum guides, it was primarily left to the individual teacher to decide how reading would be taught and what materials would be used in the classroom. Thus, the development and implementation of a curriculum and instructional program to improve the poor reading achievement of LD students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 were the major tasks of this project. Using current literature as a basis, intervention strategies were developed and implemented. The strategies were intended to reduce the discrepancy between the estimated ability and the reading performance of the students.

Selection of teachers and students for the project. The teachers who would participate in the project were selected on the basis of geographical location and concentration of LD students in grades 5 through 8. At least one teacher from each community in the county was selected to participate because the county covers such a large geographical region, and it was anticipated that the target classrooms would become models for others in their respective areas. Nine teachers in seven different schools agreed to participate. In October 1991, the nine target teachers were asked to identify their most problematic readers for possible participation in the project. Originally, the teachers recommended 62 students for the project. Six of these students were eliminated from the target group because they had less than one standard deviation discrepancy between estimated ability and reading achievement as measured and quantified by individually administered standardized tests. The 56 students who were selected to be in the target group were assessed to be the poorest readers among the students with learning disabilities in the district.

Assessment of levels of reading achievement to establish baseline data. In order to determine the reading levels of the target students and to establish baseline data for the project, the K-TEA Comprehensive Form was administered by the project manager to each student. Both decoding and comprehension skills were assessed. The total reading achievement scores of the students were compared to their intellectual level as measured by the WISC-R to determine the severity of the reading discrepancy. The students' reading discrepancies ranged from one to four standard deviations below estimated expectancies (see Table 5). The project manager held conferences with each student to discuss strengths and weaknesses, to explain the new reading program, and to encourage extra effort.

Staff Development in direct-instruction techniques. Early in October, arrangements were made for the target teachers to visit LD classrooms in another district that made use of direct-instruction techniques. The success enjoyed by the teachers using this very structured approach made an impression on their visitors. The visitation was followed by an intensive eight-hour training session in the use of direct-instruction techniques. The rationale as advocated by Darch et al. (1987) for using direct instruction with hard-to-teach students was given. The teachers learned the importance of having specific objectives which are taught directly by the teacher with adequate practice time for the students to learn the skills. The workshop leader modeled the recommended techniques and gave the teachers time to practice the following principles: precise presentation of lesson, frequent questioning, choral and individual responding, appropriate reinforcement, and guided practice.

Implementation of the Corrective Reading Program. The teachers were convinced by the evidence that lower achieving students needed a highly structured reading program that emphasized the direct-instruction techniques. Therefore, they adopted the Corrective Reading Program, developed by Engelmann, Hanner, and Johnson (1989) and published by Science Research and Associates (SRA) as the core reading program for the target students. The Corrective Reading Program provided the pretested, scripted lessons for efficient instruction and ample practice activities to teach the reading skills. Also, it made use of all of the direct-instruction techniques which are essential in reaching the hard-to-teach student. Teacher training in the use of the Corrective Reading Program was provided by SRA. Following the training in early November 1991, the teachers were ready to implement the new reading program.

Corrective Reading Placement Tests were administered, and appropriate materials were ordered. The ordering and dissemination of the reading materials were quite demanding on the project manager's time. However, the success of the project depended upon having the appropriate materials available. By December 1991, implementation of the new reading program was underway in all of the schools.

In December, the project manager attended an indepth three-day seminar provided by SRA to train her to monitor the implementation of the new reading program and the use of direct-instruction techniques in the classrooms. Subsequently, monitoring visits to each classroom were made by the project manager at least monthly. Follow-up meetings with the teachers after each visit facilitated the implementation. The project manager emphasized the importance of high expectations, supportive feedback to students, and increased time on task. It was rewarding to see the enthusiasm exhibited by the teachers as they experienced success with teaching their students to read. Coaching of teachers in the use of direct-instruction techniques and the Corrective Reading Program was provided when needed. The program used strategies designed to help correct the most frequent errors made by LD students: misidentifications, reversals, omission of words, failure to remember and follow directions, and the lack of understanding the written language. These students who lacked the skills to read and to work independently were taught the skills using direct-instruction techniques. Depending upon their individual needs, students worked in decoding or comprehension or both. The Corrective Reading Decoding Program emphasized phonics skills and provided decoding skills in a meaningful text. The Corrective Reading Comprehension Program used instructional time to build background knowledge, stressed the importance of self-monitoring, and provided thinking/reasoning skills strategies. Most often, the students responded very positively to the program.

Curriculum development. Simultaneously with the implementation of direct-instruction and the Corrective Reading Program, curriculum development activities were going on. The absence of curriculum guides in the district and the failure to include the basic skills tested by the BSAP on the IEPs of the students led to the appointment of an eight-member curriculum task force. This group was to develop the basic skills curriculum for students with learning disabilities. The task force was composed of the strongest LD teachers in the district. Four of the members of the task force were teachers of the target LD group, and the other four members were selected because of their expertise in the area of curriculum and instruction for students with learning problems. Because the project manager had a background in curriculum and a special interest in curriculum development, she provided the group with 12 hours of intensive training in this area in January 1992. Special attention was given to the importance of aligning instructional goals and objectives with the Basic Skills Assessment used in South Carolina. The following state reading objectives were addressed by the project manager during the training session: (a) decoding and word meaning, (b) details, (c) main idea, (d) reference usage, (e) inference, and (f) analysis of literature. It was believed that students should be tested on what they had been taught. The State Department had provided Teaching and Testing Manuals (1984), which gave a summary of the skills that should be taught and how they were tested. The task force was encouraged to use these and other resources in the development of the curriculum. Also, emphasis was placed on the need to create a functional curriculum guide to be used for IEP development. The curriculum guide was designed to bring more continuity and consistency across the district and from year-to-year for each handicapped child. The training drew heavily from the ideas of F. English (1987) and A. Glatthorn (1987).

Following training in curriculum development, the task force met weekly from January to April 1992, preparing the curriculum guide. The first step was to develop the purposes and belief statements concerning the basic skills curriculum for LD students. The project manager believed it was important for the group to reach a consensus about basic philosophic beliefs and the purpose of the curriculum. The title of the curriculum guide, Students Offered Success (S.O.S.), reveals a little of the group's feeling of urgency to reach these students. The purposes were stated as follows:

> The purposes of the Chesterfield County School District S.O.S. Curriculum (1992) are based on the assumption that the aspiration and life goals of students with learning disabilities are not different from those of their non-handicapped peers. Since [SIC] LD students in exceptional education programs are capable of mastering the basic skills objectives of the regular curriculum when provided with proper instruction and support, the S.O.S. Curriculum should complement and support the regular curriculum. The goals and objectives must be selected to insure inclusion of the concepts and skills assessed by the S. C. Basic Skills Assessment Program and those needed for functioning successfully in the regular education classroom. The S.O.S. Curriculum should be helpful in developing IEPs for students whose ultimate goal is to be integrated into the mainstream of regular education and later, the community and the work place. (p. 5)

After much discussion and deliberation, the curriculum task force agreed on the following belief statements which are listed in the S.O.S. Curriculum:

1. Chesterfield County School District must address the skills and special needs of students with learning disabilities who are served in special education (resource, LD self-contained) and regular education programs.

2. Learning disabled students can learn and retain the skills required to pass the South Carolina BSAP Exit Exam.

3. Many students with learning disabilities are only handicapped in the school classroom.

4. Instruction for LD students should be based on curriculum aligned to the instruments used for assessment instead of being isolated and fragmented.

5. Students, especially LD students, need positive feedback that encourages self-motivation in all school environments.

6. Students with learning disabilities should be taught vocational and transitional skills before leaving high school.

7. Parents should be encouraged to become involved in the education of their children; educators should make efforts to help parents understand their children's abilities and disabilities.

8. Students with learning disabilities need the opportunity to experience success in the regular classroom in order to improve self-image.

9. Regular and special teachers who share responsibilities for teaching LD students should have regularly scheduled meetings for collaboration in order to address the needs of these students.

10. Students with learning disabilities can become contributing members of society. (Chesterfield County School District, 1992, p. 6)

The members of the curriculum task force became very engrossed and excited about developing a curriculum and instructional program that would provide direction and guidance to the special teacher. Previously, they were not given much help, and they seemed delighted with the attention being given to exceptional education curriculum and instruction. They especially liked the idea of having a well-developed curriculum guide to aid in developing IEPs. Their enthusiasm was evident in their willingness to work after school hours on the curriculum. They began to collaborate with other teachers and to seek out effective strategies to include in the suggested activities section. The networking between the teachers, as they sought to find innovative and effective strategies for teaching basic skills, was a very positive outcome of the curriculum project.

S.O.S. Curriculum training and field testing. Before IEP writing time in April, the S.O.S. Curriculum was printed in draft form and was ready to be disseminated. The guide included the following: (a) belief statements, (b) goals and objectives, (c) suggested activities, and (d) materials and resources. The table of contents of the curriculum guide is shown in Appendix I. Training in the use of the S.O.S. Curriculum for writing IEPs was provided to all the teachers in the district who taught students with learning disabilities. Members of the task force and the project manager led the training session. The teachers gave high evaluation ratings to the training session (see

Appendix J) and expressed appreciation for the curriculum. Most teachers promised to provide feedback and suggestions for additional activities and resources during the year when the curriculum was being field tested.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) development. The teachers of the target group used the curriculum to develop the 1992-1993 IEPs for each student. Meetings were scheduled and held for each student during May 1992. Each student's IEP committee was comprised of his/her teachers, administrators, parents, school psychologist (the writer), and others when appropriate. The parents and educators discussed the progress made by the students during 1991-1992. The project manager shared the interim test results with the IEP Committee. The parents and educators were pleased about the amount of growth the students had made in reading in such a short period of time. The goals and objectives of each student's IEP were based on the student's individual strengths and weaknesses.

Parent involvement strategies. It had been discovered, during the data-gathering phase, that parent involvement in the schools had been minimal. However, the literature was abundant with references to the value of parental involvement in the education of their children (Bennett, 1987; Canter & Canter, 1991; Walberg, 1984). Therefore, the following parent involvement strategies were developed and implemented during phase one: (a) in January 1992, letters were sent to parents informing them of the new reading program and encouraging them to get involved in their child's education, (b) annual review and IEP conferences were scheduled during May 1992 with the parents of each target student, and (c) during the spring, a Parent-Educator Partnership (PEP) was organized, which involved a steering committee composed of parents, teachers, and administrators. Three parents of students participating in the project were on the steering committee. These parents were very vocal and committed to getting other parents involved. The steering committee planned to meet monthly during the summer to organize, to develop the philosophy, and to plan the PEP programs for the coming year. Plans were made to intensify the parent involvement efforts during the 1992-1993 school year.

Formative Evaluation. Formative assessment of the first year of implementation indicated that all aspects of the project were on target. Both teachers and parents were complimentary about the positive changes brought by the implementation of the project strategies. One parent remarked that her sixth-grade son volunteered to read something to her for the first time since he had entered school. A teacher reported that direct instruction had helped her to virtually eliminate the discipline problems in her classroom. Another teacher told of how a seventh-grade student who was changing schools had expressed appreciation for having Corrective Reading before going to the new school. In addition to the informal assessments, more objective evaluations were done at the end of the 1991-1992 school year.

The training in direct-instruction techniques for the target teachers was given an excellent evaluation by the teachers. The teachers were asked to rate the following statements concerning the training session: (a) I was made aware of the goals and/or objectives of the workshop, (b) the information presented will be helpful to me in my present situation, (c) the in-service session was well organized and interesting, (d) the goals and objectives of the in-service session were achieved, (e) there were opportunities for active participation, and (f) the presenter demonstrated knowledge of the topic. The evaluation form used and a compilation of the teachers' ratings are shown in Appendix K.

A rating scale from 1 to 4 was used as follows: 1-strongly agree, 2-agree somewhat, 3-disagree somewhat, and 4-strongly disagree. All nine teachers gave the best possible rating on all items with the exception of two teachers who gave the active participation item a rating of 2.

The fact that the teachers were able to demonstrate the techniques in their classrooms was more important than the high ratings given the in-service training. During the monitoring visits, seven of the nine teachers exhibited proficiency in the direct-instruction techniques during the monthly monitoring visits. Although two teachers needed some coaching in the skills early in the project, effective use of the direct-instruction techniques were evident in the classes 90% of the time.

The Basis Skills Curriculum Task Force accomplished the major task of developing the curriculum guides in record time, four months. The S.O.S. Curriculum was printed and teachers were trained to use it before IEP writing time in the spring of 1992. Teachers reported that the curriculum facilitated the IEP writing process and improved the quality of the IEP, also.

Toward the end of May, a letter and a questionnaire were sent to 18 teachers who had been given the S.O.S. Curriculum before IEP development time. The nine target teachers were included in this number. All of the teachers surveyed taught either resource or self-contained LD students in the district. The teachers were asked to respond to the following questions: (a) Was the newly developed curriculum guide helpful in writing IEP documents for 1992-1993?; (b) Would additional activities make the guide more useful?; and (c) Were they willing to send teaching activities, strategies, and resources to be included in the guide for specific objectives?

Sixteen questionnaires were returned. A composite of the responses and comments are shown in Appendix L. Fifteen teachers responded that the curriculum guide was helpful. Only one teacher indicated that the guide was not helpful. This teacher responded that he preferred to use an activity book he had used for six years and stated that the guide would have been helpful had he not had this resource. Likewise, the same 15 teachers agreed that additional activities would make the guide more useful, and 14 of the teachers indicated that they were willing to send activities, strategies, and resources to be included in the guide's next revision. The comments and suggestions made by the teachers were, overall, extremely encouraging.

In order to evaluate the reading progress made during the first phase of implementation, interim testing was done using the K-TEA Brief Form. The project manager administered the K-TEA to each of the target students in April 1992. The individual testing sessions allowed the writer the opportunity to talk with each student during the rapport-establishing time before the standardized testing began. The students, with the exception of two, indicated that they liked the new reading program and believed that it had helped to improve their reading skills. The two who said they did not like the new reading program said that the repetition bothered them.

Results of the interim K-TEA were very encouraging. The gains made by the target students in standard scores ranged from -2 to 22. A comparison of the K-TEA pretest and interim-test results are shown in Table 11. Following five months of instruction, the students gained an average of 6.5 standard scores. Even though grade equivalents are less satisfactory than standard scores for the purpose of the reporting test results, grade equivalents are reported in Table 11, also. However, Kaufman and Kaufman (1985) cautioned against misunderstanding grade equivalents. The test developers pointed out that grade equivalents indicate the average performance of students at a particular grade level on a given test. Because grade equivalents do not take into account the variability of scores and types of reading at a grade level, they cannot be interpreted literally as an indication of the grade level at which a student is performing in school. Nevertheless, the student's performance on the Comprehensive Form of the K-TEA administered in the fall (1991) can be compared to the performance on the Brief Form of the K-TEA administered in the spring (1992). Overall, the students showed a mean gain of one and one-half grade levels in five months. Only two students (17 and 44) showed no gains. Students 22 and 30 showed the greatest growth of four and three

Table 11

A Comparison of K-TEA Pretest and Interim-Test Results for the 56 Target Students
N=56

		Fall, 1991 *Pretest		Spring, 1992 *Interim		Difference	
School	Student	SS	G.Eq.	SS	G.Eq.	SS	G.Eq.
A	1	60	1.5	62	2.0	2	.5
	2	58	1.4	65	2.5	7	1.1
	3	62	1.5	63	1.8	1	.3
	4	60	1.3	64	1.9	4	.6
	5	65	1.7	71	2.6	6	.9
	6	58	1.7	65	2.6	7	.9
	7	74	2.6	-	-	-	-
	8	53	1.2	58	1.5	5	.3
B	9	77	3.9	87	5.7	10	2.2
	10	60	2.4	63	3.1	3	.7
	11	70	2.9	73	3.7	3	.8
	12	64	2.9	70	3.9	6	1.0
	13	66	3.2	75	4.8	9	1.6
	14	71	3.9	72	4.1	1	.2
	15	67	3.1	75	4.4	8	.3
C	16	66	1.9	67	2.1	1	.2
	17	61	1.3	60	1.3	-1	0
	18	72	1.9	-	-	-	-
D	19	34	2.5	-	-	-	-
	20	72	3.2	73	3.7	1	.4
	21	64	2.3	-	-	-	-
	22	89	3.8	106	7.9	17	4.1
	23	56	2.1	57	2.7	1	.6
	24	67	2.9	77	4.4	10	1.5
	25	64	3.1	76	5.2	12	2.1
E	26	80	3.0	92	4.8	12	1.8
	27	62	1.8	69	2.7	7	.9
	28	60	1.9	64	2.5	4	.6
	29	61	2.3	66	3.0	5	.7
	30	76	3.4	98	6.7	22	3.3
	31	67	2.2	78	3.7	11	1.5
	32	85	3.1	104	5.7	18	2.6
F(1)	33	66	1.9	79	3.1	13	1.1
	34	56	1.0	58	1.4	2	.4
	35	59	1.6	65	2.4	16	.8
	36	59	1.1	60	1.5	1	.4
	37	69	3.4	85	6.2	16	2.8
	38	73	2.2	74	2.6	1	.3
	39	73	2.2	82	3.8	9	1.6
	40	75	3.0	81	4.1	6	1.1
	41	55	1.4	59	1.9	4	.5
	42	74	4.2	84	6.2	10	2.0
F(2)	43	69	2.6	72	3.3	3	.7
	44	70	2.7	68	2.7	-2	0
	45	57	2.2	60	2.8	3	.6
	46	67	3.9	79	5.7	12	1.8
G(1)	47	68	1.6	-	-	-	-
	48	62	1.5	69	2.5	7	1.0
	49	62	1.7	63	2.1	1	.4
	50	77	2.3	84	3.3	7	1.0
G(2)	51	89	4.9	-	-	-	-
	52	68	2.8	74	3.9	6	1.1
	53	81	4.1	81	4.4	0	.3
	54	74	3.5	75	4.4	1	.9
	55	66	3.5	66	3.8	0	.3
	56	73	3.8	91	6.7	17	2.9

*Pretest: K-TEA Comprehensive Form *Interim Test: K-TEA Brief Form years, respectively. The testing results were shared with the students' regular teachers and parents at IEP meetings, which were conducted for each student during May. Also, principals were provided with the pretest and interim-test data.

Formative evaluation of the parent involvement component at the end of May 1992 indicated that there had been an increase in the number of parents participating in school-planned activities. At the annual review and IEP conferences in May, a substantial gain in parent participation was noted. One or both parents of 30 (57%) of the target students attended the conference as compared to 6 (10%) the year before. The parents seemed pleased with the progress made by the students in reading skills. Although the Parent Educator Partnership was only in the organizational stage at the end of the 1991-1992 school year, the steering committee was hard at work making plans for summer meetings and for the coming school year.

Therefore, based on the formative evaluation data collected at the end of the school year 1991-1992, it appeared that the first phase of the project interventions was on schedule and positive results were beginning to show. The target teachers had been trained in direct-instruction techniques and the Corrective Reading Program had been implemented. The curriculum task force had been trained, and the S.O.S. Curriculum had been developed, printed, disseminated, and made ready for field testing. The parent involvement strategies were beginning to be implemented. It appeared that no significant programmatic changes would be recommended for phase two of the project.

Implementation History-Phase Two

Alignment of IEP and BSAP. During June and July 1992, the project manager reviewed the IEPs of each of the target students. Quality of content was closely examined. Because the S.O.S. Curriculum had been used to develop the IEPs, the BSAP objectives were reflected in the IEPs. This assured that the students' education programs would be aligned to the test. The alignment of the curriculum goals and objectives to the BSAP and the *teaching objectives* (IEP) gave greater assurance of congruence between the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum.

Meeting the State Standard. The 1992 BSAP results were received in June. An analysis was made of the target students' scores. On this administration of the BSAP, 80% of the target students were recommended by their IEP committees to take the BSAP. This showed a 20% increase over the year before. There was an increase in the percentage of students meeting the standard, also. In 1991, only 12% of the target students met the standard, however, 25% met the standard in 1992. These BSAP results will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Parent-Teacher Handbook. The project manager developed the handbook, "Parents and Educators Teaming for Student Success," during June and July. The purpose of the handbook was to provide suggestions for teachers and parents in working together as a team to provide encouragement and success for students. The handbook's table of contents is shown in Appendix M. The first section of the handbook was designed to help teachers win parent cooperation and support. The handbook drew heavily from suggestions in Canter and Canter (1991). Some of the major suggestions for the teachers included: (a) how to establish positive communication with parents early in the school year, (b) how to develop a parent involvement plan, and (c) how to conduct a successful parent conference.

In the handbook, teachers were encouraged to make telephone calls to each of their students before school began to establish positive relationships between the school and home. Teachers were urged to send home a letter of introduction on the first day of school giving parents information about the teacher and plans for the class for the upcoming year. Also, the teacher's letter reminded the parents that their support was needed and that the education of their child required a team effort.

The handbook stressed the importance of having positive parent conferences before there was a problem. Teachers were reminded that they would show parents they really cared about their child and would accomplish more if they used the three keys to positive conferences:

(1) Let me tell you something that I find very positive about your child.

(2) Please tell me something that you find positive about your child.

(3) Let's take these two positive areas and discuss some things we can both do, at home and at school, to further encourage these positive traits.

The handbook pointed out that when it was necessary to have a problem-solving conference, the parents would be much more supportive if good relationships had been established before problems arose. The problem-solving conference planning sheet was suggested for use when there were problems (see Appendix N).

The parent's section of the handbook was designed to provide suggestions for parents on how to encourage their children to be more responsible. The following major topics were discussed: (a) dealing with a child with learning disabilities, (b) dealing with behavior, (c) improving your child's self-image, (c) homework tips, (d) how to help your child study for tests, and (e) how to help your child become a better reader.

At an in-service meeting in August, the handbook, "Parents and Educators Teaming for Student Success", was presented to the teachers. During this in-service program, the teachers were trained to work more effectively with parents by using the ideas in the handbook and in the video, Parents on Your Side (Canter & Canter, 1991).

Teacher Training. Because three of the eight target teachers did not return to teach in the exceptional children programs in the fall, the new teachers replacing them required intensive training in the direct-instruction techniques and Corrective Reading. In September, the new teachers were given a full day of training and the returning teachers were provided with two hours of refresher training. The agenda for this staff-development workshop is shown in Appendix O. The teachers evaluated this workshop as being helpful and well organized.

Continuation of Corrective Reading. Corrective Reading materials needed to continue the implementation of the program were ordered during the summer and disseminated to the teachers in August. Following a brief review, the students continued in the Corrective Reading Program they were in at the end of 1991-1992 school year. Each lesson contained activities for approximately 50 minutes of teacher-directed work and guided practice in application of the skills. Every lesson specified both teacher and student behavior and provided a test of student performance. Records of student performance on daily exercises provided documentation of student progress.

Gersten (1985) found that involvement in reading based on direct instruction produced higher achievement gains for handicapped children than traditional approaches. Teacher behavior and classroom organization with emphasis on how instructional time was used greatly influenced student achievement. Therefore, the following three-phase approach for teaching reading to students with learning disabilities was developed: (a) teach strategies in isolation, (b) practice the strategy with controlled materials, and (c) apply strategies to regular classroom content. This basic approach was used in teaching decoding and comprehension skills in the Corrective Reading Program. In the beginning, the teacher was the most vital source of information and the materials were highly structured. However, one goal of the program was to bridge the gap between the level of student performance in Corrective Reading and the level required to read and comprehend content area textbooks.

An important aspect of the Corrective Reading Program was the opportunities for practice offered to the students. The individual checkouts in the decoding strand assured that the students practiced the skills taught each day. At least once a week, the student's reading was timed and both rate and accuracy were measured. The time limit decreased throughout the program so students were motivated to read more fluently as their decoding skills improved. The skills were taught in a cumulative manner which meant that once a skill was taught, it was continually reviewed or it became part of a more complex skill. In addition, the students were provided the opportunity to apply their skills to examples normally associated with content area reading.

The project manager continued to monitor the implementation of the Corrective Reading Program. The teachers demonstrated skills in the use of the direct-instruction techniques. Classroom visitation revealed enthusiastic teachers who were using excellent instructional materials in an effective manner. The students seemed motivated to learn, and their progress charts indicated that they were indeed learning.

Parent involvement. The Parent Educator Partnership (PEP) Steering Committee, which was appointed in the spring, met during the summer of 1992 and developed the organization's philosophy (see Appendix P). Also, they planned activities to get parents involved in their child's education. Letters were sent and telephone calls were made inviting parents to participate.

In early September, a Back-to-School Open House was planned for each of the targeted classrooms. Invitations were sent to all parents asking them to come to their child's classroom to see a demonstration of the new reading program. A total of 39 parents of targeted students were in attendance. Door prizes were offered, and extra credit was given to each child who got a parent to attend. The parents were provided with their section of the handbook, "Parents and Educators Teaming for Student Success." Tips were given on how parents could help their children to develop better reading skills. Parents were encouraged to use Power Reading sessions with their child each day. Power Reading involved the parent reading with the student each day. It required that the parent or the student read a selection and then the parent ask questions about what was read. The parents were asked to sign the Parents as Reading Partners

Contract (see Appendix Q).

The students served refreshments and acted as hosts and hostesses for the Open House. Baby sitting services were provided by the Teacher Cadets from the high schools. The attendance was good with 75% of the targeted students having at least one parent in attendance.

The next PEP event was planned for September 29, 1992. It was entitled Educational Fair for Parents of Exceptional Children. Fair-like booths were set up, and participants were invited to attend concurrent sessions, which were of interest to them. Ten-minute presentations on a variety of topics were featured. The list of topics and program agenda are shown in Appendix R. Approximately 60 parents attended this first PEP sponsored event. Of this group, 22 were parents of the targeted students. This represented 42% of the target group.

Other events designed to get parents and educators to become partners in education were planned for the 1992-1993 school year. At the Fall Parent Conference Night, 50% of the targeted students had one or both parents in attendance. A Learning Styles Workshop was attended by 27 (52%) of the targeted parents. The Winter Parent Conference Night had 15 (29%) of the targeted students' parents present. The Job Opportunities for Exceptional Children Program brought 10 (19%) parents to school. Attendance at the PEP Program, Characteristics of the Attention Deficit (ADD) Child, was good with 26 (50%) of the targeted group represented. Parents were called and urged to attend the events.

Incentives were given to the students to get their parents to come to the parent activities. Ten door prizes were given out at the PEP sponsored events. A pizza party was given for the 39 students who got their parents to attend the Corrective Reading Open House at their respective schools. Extra credit or a day without homework was given to each student whose parent attended an event. Because many of the same parents attended each event, some students received an award for every parent involvement activity. Unfortunately, 13 (25%) of the students did not have a parent attend any of the activities. However, thanks to the efforts of the teachers and the PEP Committee, each parent received the handbook, Teaming for Success, which provided tips on how parents can help children be successful in school. Many people worked cooperatively in the effort to turn parents into partners for education. Parent participation greatly increased, from 10% to 75%, during the first semester of the 1992-1993 school year.

Students Offered Success Curriculum. The curriculum was field tested during the school year 1992-1993. The students' IEPs were developed using the S.O.S. Curriculum Guide. The Curriculum Task Force continued to meet on a monthly basis. Activities for the objectives were collected from both the regular education and special education teachers. There was such an abundance of quality activities that it was decided to made a separate activities notebook. The activities were correlated to the objectives in the S.O.S. Curriculum. Positive feedback was received by all who used the curriculum. The teachers indicated that the curriculum made IEP writing much easier and that the IEP document was of a better quality.

Summative Evaluation. In February 1993, the K-TEA was again administered to each of the targeted students. Four of the students had moved during the year which left 52 students in the target group. The project manager interviewed each student during the posttesting session about the reading program and their feelings about their progress in reading. All 52 students indicated that they felt they had made good progress in reading. The posttest results showed extraordinary growth in reading by most of the students. The posttest standard scores ranged from 60 to 116 with a mean of 78. This showed a significant gain over the pretest mean of 65. The intervention strategies appeared to be successful in improving the reading skills of middle-grade students with learning disabilities. Results will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Results

Results of Implementation

The following objectives were established to be accomplished by the intervention strategies of this MARP:

Terminal Objective One - As a result of the MARP intervention extending from August 1991 to March 1992, 33% of the target group will meet the standard on the BSAP administered in April 1992 as compared to 12% on the BSAP administered in April 1991.

Assessment of Terminal Objective One - The 1992 BSAP results showed a substantial increase in the number of target LD students meeting the state standard in reading as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

A Comparison of the Number of Target Students Meeting the BSAP Reading Standard (700) in 1991 and 1992

N = 56	1991	Percentage	1992	Percentage
Students with BSAP Scores	34	60	45	80
Students scoring above standard	7	12	14	25

In 1991, only 12% of the target students scored 700 or above compared to 25% in 1992. The number of students meeting the standard doubled. Also, it was important that there was an increase in the number of students taking the state-mandated tests.

Only 34 (or 60%) of the target students had taken the BSAP tests in 1991; 45 students (or 80%) participated in the BSAP in 1992. This indicated that the IEP committees are recommending the state tests for more of the LD students. Evidently, expectations for these students are a little higher than before implementation of the project interventions. However, the goal of 33% of the target group meeting the standard was not reached. Perhaps the goal was too ambitious because the new reading program had been implemented for less than four months when the BSAP was administered in April 1992.

Furthermore, the basic skills curriculum component of the project, which aligned the teaching objectives to the BSAP, was not in place at the time the state testing was done. The S.O.S. Curriculum was being disseminated at about the same time as the administration of the BSAP. Therefore, it was anticipated that when students had more time with the Corrective Reading Program and the curriculum guide was in use longer, more students would meet the state standard. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this MARP, terminal objective one was not met.

Terminal Objective Two. As a result of the MARP intervention extending from August 1991 through February 1993, the discrepancy between the LD students' ability as measured by the WISC-R and reading achievement standard scores (SS) as measured by the K-TEA will decrease by 50% from a mean of 27 SS points to a mean difference of 14 SS points.

Assessment of Objective Two. All of the target students had been identified as having learning disabilities. In Chesterfield County, students are said to have a learning disability if they have at least average cognitive skills and their achievement falls significantly (1 or more standard deviations) below their estimated ability. The ability of each student had been assessed with the Wechsler Intelligence Scale-Revised (WISC-R), and these scores were used as the measure of the students' estimated ability.

The Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (K-TEA), a highly regarded individual test of academic skills, was used to measure the reading skills of the students. Table 13

Table 13

Comparison of Ability and Reading Pretest and Posttest Standard Scores (SS) of Target Group

School	Student	WISC-R IQ Score	K-TEA Reading Pretest SS	Discrepancy Between IQ and Reading Pretest SS	K-TEA Reading Posttest SS	Discrepancy Between IQ and Reading Posttest SS
A	1	85	60	25	62	23
	2	86	58	28	66	20
	3	90	62	28	64	26
	4	90	60	30	64	26
	5	97	65	32	71	26
	6	88	58	30	65	23
	7	115	74	41	-	-
	8	84	53	31	58	26
B	9	102	60	24	92	10
	10	84	60	24	71	13
	11	87	72	15	85	2
	12	90	64	26	75	15
	13	88	66	22	76	12
	14	91	71	20	84	7
	15	90	67	23	81	9
C	16	85	66	19	72	13
	17	88	61	27	62	26
	18	98	72	26	86	12
D	19	101	62	39	-	-
	20	92	72	20	86	6
	21	87	64	23	-	-
	22	118	81	37	106	12
	23	91	56	35	61	30
	24	128	67	61	77	51
	25	94	64	30	85	9
E	26	106	80	26	99	7
	27	93	62	31	71	22
	28	94	60	34	65	29
	29	88	61	27	63	25
	30	106	76	30	99	7
	31	88	67	21	78	10
	32	103	85	18	116	-13
F(1)	33	82	66	16	79	3
	34	93	56	37	60	33
	35	100	59	41	68	32
	36	87	59	28	60	27
	37	93	69	24	85	8
	38	85	73	12	78	7
	39	109	73	36	85	24
	40	93	75	18	81	12
	41	98	55	43	68	30
	42	95	74	21	89	6
F(2)	43	102	69	33	72	30
	44	106	70	36	68	38
	45	101	57	44	68	33
	46	95	67	28	80	15
G(1)	47	85	68	17	89	-4
	48	85	62	23	69	16
	49	81	62	19	66	15
	50	92	77	15	90	2
G(2)	51	109	89	20	-	-
52	88	68	20	78	10	
53	96	81	15	100	-4	
54	90	74	16	83	7	
	55	96	81	15	82	14
56	88	71	17	94	-6	
Mean			67	27	78	16

Legend: Numbers in parenthesis denote different teachers in the same school.

shows a comparison of ability standard scores as measured by the WISC-R and pre- and posttest reading achievement standard scores as quantified by the K-TEA. The pretest results showed standard score discrepancies ranging from 15 to 61 between estimated ability and reading achievement. Because this range was from one to four standard deviations, all students were assessed to exhibit significant discrepancies. The pretest mean discrepancy in standard scores was 27.

Following implementation of the MARP strategies, the K-TEA was again administered. The posttest results showed dramatic improvement. Surprisingly, 27 of the students no longer showed a significant discrepancy between estimated ability and reading achievement. This means that approximately 51% of the target group can no longer be classified as learning disabled in reading. For four of the students, their reading achievement scores exceeded their estimated ability scores. The range of standard score discrepancy between ability and reading achievement was -13 to 51 with a mean discrepancy of 16. Therefore, the discrepancy between the LD students estimated ability as measured by the WISC-R and their reading achievement as measured by the K-TEA was decreased from 27 to 16, or by 41%. Even though the discrepancy was greatly reduced, the MARP terminal objective to decrease it by 50% to 14 was not met.

Terminal Objective Three. As a result of MARP interventions extending from August 1991 through February 1993, at least 50% of the target students will gain two or more grade levels in reading as measured by the K-TEA pretests and posttests.

Assessment of Objective Three. The K-TEA was used as pre- and posttests to measure the reading achievement of the target students. The students' ages and grade placements at the beginning of the project and a comparison of the K-TEA pretest and posttest reading achievement scores are shown in Table 14.

The K-TEA was individually administered to each student in November of 1991

Table 14

A Comparison of K-TEA Pretest and Posttest Reading Achievement Results for the Target Students N=56

School	Student	Age	Grade Placement	Fall, 1991 Pretest		February, 1993 Posttest		Difference	
				SS	G.Eq.	SS	G.Eq.	SS	G.Eq.
A	1	12-8	5.2	60	1.5	62	2.1	2	.6
	2	12-9	6.2	58	1.4	66	3.0	8	1.6
	3	11-9	6.2	62	1.5	64	2.2	2	.7
	4	12-0	6.2	60	1.3	64	2.3	4	1.0
	5	11-9	5.2	65	1.7	71	2.7	6	1.0
	6	13-1	6.2	58	1.7	65	2.6	7	.9
	7	11-1	6.2	4	2.6	Moved			
	8	13-1	6.2	53	1.2	58	1.9	5	.7
B	9	13-1	6.2	77	3.9	92	6.2	15	2.3
	10	14-4	7.2	60	2.4	71	4.8	11	2.4
	11	13-1	7.2	70	2.9	85	6.2	15	3.3
	12	14-1	7.2	64	2.9	75	5.2	11	2.3
	13	14-5	7.2	66	3.2	76	5.7	10	2.5
	14	14-1	7.2	71	3.9	84	6.7	13	2.8
	15	14-0	7.2	67	3.1	81	6.2	14	2.1
C	16	11-6	5.2	66	1.9	72	2.8	6	.9
	17	11-11	5.2	61	1.3	62	1.8	1	.5
	18	12-4	6.2	72	1.9	86	5.2	14	3.3
D	19	13-9	7.2	34	2.5	Moved			
	20	13-2	7.2	72	3.2	86	6.2	14	3.0
	21	13-0	7.2	64	2.3	Moved			
	22	12-0	7.2	89	3.8	106	8.5	17	4.7
	23	14-7	7.2	56	2.1	61	3.5	5	1.4
	24	13-9	7.2	67	2.9	77	5.2	10	2.3
	25	14-6	7.2	64	3.1	85	7.3	21	4.2
E	26	11-2	5.2	80	3.0	99	6.7	19	3.7
	27	12-9	5.2	62	1.8	71	3.5	9	1.7
	28	13-3	6.2	60	1.9	65	3.1	5	1.2
	29	13-11	6.2	61	2.3	63	3.1	2	.8
	30	12-6	6.2	76	3.4	99	7.9	23	4.5
	31	12-4	6.2	67	2.2	78	3.7	11	1.4
	32	10-3	5.2	85	3.1	116	8.5	31	5.4
F(1)	33	11-11	6.2	66	1.9	79	4.1	13	2.2
	34	11-9	6.2	56	1.0	60	1.9	4	.9
	35	12-10	6.2	59	1.6	68	3.3	9	1.7
	36	11-6	6.2	59	1.1	60	1.7	1	.6
	37	14-1	7.2	69	3.4	85	6.7	16	3.3
	38	11-2	5.2	73	2.2	78	3.7	5	1.5
	39	11-3	5.2	73	2.2	85	4.4	12	2.2
	40	12-0	5.2	75	3.0	81	4.8	6	1.8
	41	13-3	8.2	55	1.4	68	3.7	13	2.3
	42	14-3	8.2	74	4.2	89	7.9	15	3.7
F(2)	43	12-10	5.2	69	2.6	72	3.7	3	1.1
	44	12-0	5.2	70	2.7	68	3.3	2	.6
	45	14-7	8.2	57	2.2	68	4.4	11	2.2
	46	15-0	8.2	67	3.9	80	6.7	13	2.8
G(1)	47	10-7	5.2	68	1.6	89	4.1	21	2.5
	48	12-2	5.2	62	1.5	69	2.6	7	1.1
	49	12-8	5.2	62	1.7	66	2.4	4	.7
	50	10-6	5.2	77	2.3	90	4.4	13	2.1
G(2)	51	12-0	6.2	89	4.9	Moved			
	52	13-4	6.2	68	2.8	78	5.2	10	2.4
	53	12-9	6.2	81	4.1	100	8.5	19	4.4
	54	13.2	7.2	74	3.5	83	5.7	9	2.2
	55	14-0	7.2	66	3.5	82	6.7	16	3.2
	56	13-5	7.2	73	3.8	94	7.9	21	4.1

as a pretest. In February 1993, the K-TEA was again individually administered to each student to determine the amount of growth made in reading during the implementation phase of the project. Four students had moved from the district leaving only 52 students in the target group at the end of the project as is reflected in Table 14.

The pretest results indicated that the target students who were placed in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 were all reading significantly below grade expectancy at the time of the pretesting in the fall of 1991. Although many students were older than the normal age for their grade, they scored from one to six grade levels below grade placement.

Moreover, the target students had received five or more years of reading instruction in school, yet, the pretest results showed that 20, or over 35%, of the students' reading grade equivalents were still at grade 1. However, following one year of implementation of the MARP strategies, posttest results showed that the grade equivalent gains ranged from six months to over five years. With only one year of instruction, 41 (73%) of the students gained one or more grade levels, 29 (52%) gained two or more grade levels, 13 (23%) of the students gained three or more grade levels, and 6 (10%) gained four or more grade levels. One student, or .02%, made more than five years of growth in reading in just one year. When compared to the growth made in reading during the previous years, these results were very encouraging indeed. Because 55% of the students gained two or more grade levels, terminal objective three was met and exceeded.

Terminal Objective Four. As a result of the MARP intervention extending from August 1991 through February 1993, 50% of the targeted parents will attend five activities sponsored by the parent-educator partnership as compared to 10% participation in school activities in September 1991.

Assessment of Objective Four. It had been discovered during the data-gathering phase of the project that parent involvement in school activities by the parents of LD students was minimal. In September 1991, it was determined that only 10% of the parents of the target students had participated in school activities. Special efforts were made to get the parents of the target students to come to the annual review/IEP meetings in the spring of 1992. The MARP manager attended each of the meetings. Parents were informed about the new reading program and encouraged to become involved with their child's education. Thirty-two parents of target students attended these conferences. This represented over 57% of the student's parents, a substantial increase over the 10% of the previous year.

A Parent-Educator Partnership (PEP) was organized in the spring 1992. Table 15 shows the major parent involvement activities sponsored by the PEP and the percentage of targeted parents who attended.

Table 15

The Major Parent Involvement Activities and the Rate of Participation by Parents of Targeted Students N = 52

Parent Involvement Activities	Total Number Participating	Parents of Target Students Participating	
		Number	Percentage
Spring (1992) Annual Review/ IEP Meetings	468	30	57
Exceptional Education Fair	60	22	42
Corrective Reading Open House	48	39	75
Fall Parent Conference Night	156	26	50
Learning Styles Workshop	110	27	52
Winter Parent Conference Night	96	15	29
Job Opportunities for Exceptional Children	50	10	19
Characteristics of ADD Child	75	26	50
Teaming for Success Handbook Distribution	105	52	100

A steering committee composed of parents, teachers and administrators was in charge of developing the philosophy (see Appendix P) and planning the events for the 1992-1993 school year. Three of the target students' parents were on the steering committee of the PEP. One of these parents became the president of the PEP.

Each of the parent involvement activities were described in detail in chapter 4. One of the most successful and best attended activities was the Corrective Reading Open House. The parents and regular teachers seemed to appreciate the modeling of a Corrective Reading lesson using direct-instruction techniques. The students enjoyed demonstrating the lessons for their guests.

Likewise, the handbook, "Teaming for Success", was very well received by both parents and teachers. The parents of all targeted students were given a handbook. They were presented and explained at the Open House in September and parent conferences in October. Handbooks were sent to parents who were not in attendance at the Open House or parent conference.

The parent involvement strategies were very effective in getting more parental participation. Because six of the parent involvement activities had at least 50% participation of the targeted students' parents, terminal objective four was met and exceeded.

Process Objective One. Target teachers, following training in direct-instruction techniques, will use this mode in teaching as evidenced by classroom observation records.

The project manager planned and organized the training of the target teachers in direct-instruction techniques. The training sessions were given excellent evaluations by the attending teachers. Appendixes J and K show a compilation of the ratings given by the teachers on the evaluation forms. All ratings were positive with a large majority being the highest possible rating.

Observations were conducted in each of the nine target classrooms by the project manager on a monthly basis. Follow-up conferences were held with the teachers. The following components of the direct-instruction approach were discussed during conferences: (1) teacher-directed lessons, (b) pacing, (c) appropriate feedback, (d) guided practice, and (e) time on task.

The classroom observation records (see Appendix S) showed that 90% of the time the lessons observed were rated as effective. The two areas that most often needed improvement were pacing and the corrective procedures. Initially, teachers did not pace the lesson fast enough and, therefore, the lesson lasted too long. However, as the teachers gained experience, the pace increased and the lessons were more effective.

The direct-instruction model used by the teachers was observed to place emphasis on the following:

1. Increasing the time allocated to reading instruction.
2. Using a specific set of learning procedures for producing change in the learning behavior (structured format).
3. Modeling of the tasks to be performed.
4. Teaching for automaticity and generalization to other places and content.
5. Practicing decoding skills in meaningful context.
6. Using instructional time to build background knowledge.
7. Teaching thinking/reasoning skills.

Effective use of direct-instruction techniques was observed in all nine classrooms across the school district. Therefore, process objective one was met as evidenced by classroom observation records.

Process Objective Two. An effective reading program using the direct-instruction approach will be adopted and implemented as evidenced by the students' classroom performance and reading mastery tests results.

Assessment of Process Objective Two. The students responded well to the increased time on task provided by the Corrective Reading Program. The structure provided by the sequenced, scripted lessons seemed to provide the format needed by many of the students. The repetition and systematic strategy for correction of errors gave the students more confidence and courage to try.

Each lesson was taught to a certain criteria. If a student did not meet the criteria, he/she repeated the lesson until criteria was reached. Therefore, the students mastered the skills before moving on. The reading mastery tests given after every five lessons showed that all students reached 85% to 98% mastery on all lessons.

Process Objective Three. A basic skills curriculum will be developed, adopted, and implemented as evidenced by the curriculum guide and teachers' evaluation of its effectiveness.

Assessment of Process Objective Three. The Students Offered Success (S.O.S.) Curriculum was developed by a task force of LD teachers during the first four months of 1992. It was adopted as the basic skills curriculum for Chesterfield County School District's students with learning disabilities who spend at least part of the day in a regular education classroom. It was used in the development of the IEP goals and objectives for the target students in May to be implemented in the fall of 1992. A detailed listing of the contents of the curriculum guide is shown in Appendix I.

The curriculum was field tested during the 1992-1993 school year. All resource teachers in the district were requested to use it, make suggestions for revisions, and develop additional activities/resources to be included in the revision. A questionnaire was sent to 18 teachers who had used the S.O.S. Curriculum; 16 teachers responded. Table 16 summarizes the structured responses given on the questionnaire. The comments and suggestions made by the teachers are shown in Appendix L.

Table 16

A Summary of the Teacher Questionnaire Results, May 1992

N = 16

Questions	Responses	
Was S.O.S. Curriculum helpful in writing IEPs?	1 Not Helpful	15 Helpful
Additional activities will make the guide more useful.	0 Disagree	15 Agree
Are you willing to send activities, strategies, resources to be included in the guide?	1 Unwilling	15 Willing

All of the teachers except one indicated that the S.O.S. Curriculum was helpful. The one teacher who indicated that it was not helpful indicated in his comments that he was using something already that he preferred to continue using. Because this high school resource teacher was not a part of the project to improve the reading skills of selected middle-grade students, the pretest and posttest data comparable to that of the target group were not available for his students. However, after hearing the results of the project and other teachers' positive comments, this teacher has indicated that he will use the S.O.S. Curriculum Guide in the development of IEPs for the 1993-1994 school year. The comments on the questionnaire from the teachers were overwhelmingly positive. One comment seemed to summarize most teachers' feelings: "The curriculum guide was a great help to me. In addition to helping me write IEPs, it will be a valuable guide throughout the school year. Dealing with as many diversified learning problems as we do, the S.O.S. guide is a quick reference for ideas and activities."

In addition to the questionnaire, the writer received many verbal comments about the effectiveness of the curriculum in providing guidance for including the basic skills in the instructional program of students. Many teachers told of how it fostered better communication between the special education and regular education teachers. By using the S.O.S. Curriculum, the teachers felt that there would be greater congruence between the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum. Therefore, process objective three was accomplished.

Process Objective Four. Parent involvement activities will be developed and implemented as evidenced by letters, records of attendance at planned functions, and evaluation forms from parents.

Assessment of Objective Four. The parents of the targeted students received a letter from the project manager inviting them to participate in the activities planned for them (Appendix T). The teachers and PEP Steering Committee worked hard to get the parents involved. Many of the parents responded and this resulted in a substantial increase in parent participation. Attendance records showed an increase from 10% to 57% of the target students with a parent involved in school activities. There were nine major activities planned for parent involvement. Table 15 provides a listing of these activities and the degree of parent participation.

The evaluation forms turned in by PEP participants indicated that the parent involvement activities had been beneficial. Appendix U provides an example of the evaluation form used for this purpose.

Process objective two was met because there is evidence that the parent involvement activities that were developed and implemented resulted in increased parent participation. Parents expressed appreciation for being made to feel that they were partners in their children's education.

Process Objective Five. The number of BSAP reading objectives included in the IEPs of target students will increase from a mean of two for each student to a mean of four for each student.

Assessment of Process Objective Five. Table 17 shows a comparison of the

Table 17

A Comparison of the Number of BSAP Reading Objectives on the IEPs of Target Students in the Spring of 1992 and Spring 1993 N=56

School	Student	Number of Reading Objectives Spring 1992	Number of Reading Objectives Spring 1993
A	1	3	6
	2	15	7
	3	0	7
	4	1	8
	5	2	8
	6	2	9
	7	-	-
	8	1	10
B	9	0	10
	10	2	6
	11	3	8
	12	2	6
	13	0	9
	14	2	8
	15	2	8
C	16	2	7
	17	1	9
	18	0	8
	19	-	-
	20	-	-
	21	3	7
	22	2	10
	23	1	7
	24	0	9
	25	2	8
E	26	4	7
	27	3	8
	28	5	9
	29	1	6
	30	3	6
	31	4	6
	32	3	8
F(1)	33	3	9
	34	2	6
	35	0	5
	36	0	7
	37	3	8
	38	0	7
	39	3	8
	40	2	8
	41	2	10
	42	1	6
F(2)	43	3	7
	44	2	5
	45	2	4
	46	3	6
G(1)	47	2	10
	48	2	5
	49	4	6
	50	1	7
G(2)	51	-	-
	52	4	11
	53	2	9
	54	2	5
	55	0	9
	56	4	4
		Mean = 2	Mean = 7

number of BSAP reading objectives for 1992 and 1993. During the data-gathering phase of the project, the 1991-1992 IEPs of the target students were examined to determine the number of BSAP reading objectives. Because many of the students had not met the state standard on the state mandated BSAP, it seemed unwise not to include objectives on their IEPs to address reading skills tested. The reading objectives included on the IEPs ranged from 0 to 15 with a group mean of 2. Following the MARP interventions implemented from August 1991 to May 1992 when the new IEPs for 1992-1993 were developed, the IEP committee greatly increased the number of reading objectives on the IEPs.

The number of IEP objectives, which were tested on the BSAP, increased from a mean of 2 to a mean of 7. Therefore, process objective five was met and exceeded. There were at least five reasons for the increase in reading objectives in 1993:

1. The IEPs being evaluated in 1992 had been written in 1991 before the basic skills curriculum training for the teachers. During the training, emphasis was placed on the importance of aligning the teaching objectives to the tests used to assess progress. Therefore, the exceptional education teachers were more cognizant of the need to include specific reading objectives on the IEPs.

2. The S.O.S. Curriculum Guide had not been developed when the 1992 IEPs were written in the spring of 1991. The curriculum guide was developed, printed, and disseminated in the spring of 1992 just before the 1993 IEPs were written. The goals and objectives of the curriculum guide were aligned to the BSAP. The guide was very comprehensive in its scope of reading skills including readiness, decoding, word meaning, details, main idea, reference usage, inference, and critical analysis. These are the same skills tested on the BSAP. Thus, the curriculum guide facilitated the inclusion of critical reading skills in the development of the 1993 IEPs.

3. In the fall of 1991, the target teachers were trained in the use of the techniques of direct instruction. The importance of having specific teaching objectives was emphasized during the training.

4. The value of high teacher expectations for student's learning was stressed during the direct-instruction training and during the monitoring visits made by the project manager.

5. The IEP process used in the district improved. The project manager was a member of each target student's IEP Committee and witnessed the improved process. Although all members of the IEP Committee had equal rights, the exceptional education teacher who had worked with the student all year was in a better position to make recommendations for objectives for the next year. The teachers came to the IEP meetings better prepared to report on the progress of the previous year and to develop the objectives for the coming year. The target teachers seemed to feel empowered to make these important decisions. In the IEP process, more LD students were recommended to participate in the state testing program.

Summary of Accomplishments

The data gathered during the initial stages of this MARP indicated that the target group of LD students, who were in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, were reading two to six grade levels below grade placement. The following research-based solution strategies were planned and implemented: (1) developing a basic skills curriculum, which was aligned to the state testing program; (2) training the target teachers in curriculum planning and direct-instruction techniques; (c) implementing the strategies of direct-instruction and the Corrective Reading Program; (d) improving the use of the IEP process in promoting effective communication between regular education and special education teachers who share the same students, in increasing parent . involvement in program planning and in developing individualized programs, which are congruent with the students needs; and (e) winning parents over as partners in education.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention strategies showed very positive results. The number of target students meeting the state standard on the BSAP increased from 12% to 25%. In addition, there was an increase in the number of students recommended to participate in the BSAP from 60% to 80%. The discrepancy between the target students' ability and reading achievement was reduced by 41%. Twenty-seven of the 52 students no longer exhibited a significant discrepancy. Following one year of implementation of the strategies, over 55% of the students gained two or more grade levels. Parents organized and led the Parent Educator Partnership. Parent participation in school activities increased from 10% to 75%.

Accomplishments included more than the quantifiable data. The improved morale and sense of empowerment among the target teachers were very positive side effects. Much more networking and collaboration among the teachers were noted. The target teachers shared their success with other exceptional education teachers and created interest among other teachers in using the project strategies with their students. As a result, 10 additional teachers were trained in direct instruction and have implemented reading programs, which used these approaches, during the 1992-1993 school year.

All of the exceptional education teachers in the district are making use of the curriculum developed by the curriculum task force. The positive feedback has been very gratifying. A large percentage of the teachers in the district contributed activities to be included in the revision of the curriculum guide. The response to contribute activities was so great that a second volume exclusively for activities for teaching the objectives was planned.

Finally, the most rewarding accomplishment was to see the pride in the faces of students as they finally learned to read. Many had become so discouraged they had almost given up and had stopped trying. On March 22, 1993, in an interview for a Hartsville Messenger newspaper article ("School Project, 1993), one student told of how the other kids used to laugh at him when he tried to read (see Appendix V). However, he said that he was no longer embarrassed to read before his friends because the new reading program had helped him to become a better reader. The most important results of this project are summed up in the words of the student who told the reporter, "I couldn't read, but now I can!"

Discussion

The results of this MARP, which had as its goal to develop and to implement a curriculum and instructional program to improve the reading achievement of middle-grade students with learning disabilities, indicated that the project was successful. Even though the journey toward improvement had just begun, the S.O.S. Curriculum which promised to be a very valuable tool for increasing collaboration among regular education and special education teachers and for parent involvement efforts, was in place. Likewise, the teachers had been trained in the direct-instruction techniques and were excited about the results achieved during the first year of implementation of the Corrective Reading Program. Parents were busy getting other parents involved in school activities.

The IEP process had improved resulting in an IEP document that included the critical reading skills needed by the students with learning disabilities. Also, it encouraged the use of appropriate methods to bring the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum into closer alignment so that the learned curriculum could be maximized.

The project's success in reducing the discrepancy between the estimated ability and reading achievement was one of the most encouraging aspects of the project. This seemed to support the long held view of proponents of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) that many children are labeled learning disabled because of ineffective instruction and a lack of regular education options designed to meet the needs of children with diverse learning styles (Will, 1986).

The increased teacher morale was another rewarding side effect of the project. Two of the project teachers saw every child in their reading group gain two or more grade levels in one year. One of the target teachers said to the writer, "Why didn't someone tell me about the Corrective Reading Program before now. I had been trying to teach one little boy to read for four years. I felt like a failure and he did, too. But finally he has learned to read. It is a wonderful program."

While all the objectives of the project were not met, many very encouraging and positive results were realized. The project required many hours of hard work by numerous people. It seemed an impossible task to complete the S.O.S. Curriculum Guide in just four months. But the deadline was reached, and the students were "offered success" in the process. This project was ambiguous and, therefore, frustrating because only two of the four terminal objectives were achieved, but the results were well worth the effort because children who could not read now can.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Recommendations

The project intervention designed to improve the reading skills of middle-grade students with learning disabilities will be maintained and expanded to include all of the students with learning disabilities in Chesterfield County School District. The S.O.S. Curriculum, which emphasizes the basic skills, will be revised as needed to reflect the state requirements and to add teaching activities and resources.

Not only will the direct-instruction techniques be used with LD students, but the model will be used in teaching reading to other mildly disabled students such as the educable mentally disabled and the emotionally disabled. Likewise, a functional curriculum component should be developed and added to the S.O.S. Curriculum to provide guidance for developing instructional programs for students who are functioning at a lower cognitive level. The staff development in curriculum planning, direct-instruction techniques, and Corrective Reading will be ongoing as new teachers join the district and fresh ideas are added to the curriculum.

It is recommended that school districts with a large percentage of at-risk students adopt a reading program that makes use of the direct-instruction approach to be used in the regular first- and second-grade classrooms. This would allow children to be reached before they experience years of failure and may reduce the number of students who are labeled handicapped. The Reading Mastery Program published by SRA is a core basal program which makes use of the direct-instruction model. A letter has been written to the South Carolina State Department of Education by the project manager suggesting that the state adopt that program for use as a basal reading program for at-risk students.

Implications

The outcomes of this MARP have implications for the Regular Education Initiative (Will, 1986). This initiative called for changes in the current categorical services provided for children with special needs. It specifically called for changes in the segregated dual system (special education and regular education), which contributes to minimal communication and coordination between general and special education and the diminished general education responsibility for students with special needs. If 27 of the LD students in this project could gain in reading skills to the point where there was no longer a significant discrepancy between cognitive ability and reading achievement, then efforts should be made to provide small group, direct-instruction options in regular education programs so the labeling could be avoided in the first place.

The processes used in this project should be helpful to use in other districts and situations where students are reading significantly below expectancy. It is imperative to train teachers in the importance of having the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum in alignment. This must be done if learning is to be maximized.

The techniques used in the direct-instruction model are research based and should be beneficial in many classroom situations. The following strategies are universal and are suggested for any classroom where students are not achieving to realistic expectations: (a) increase time on task, (b) use a structured format, (c) model the tasks to be learned, (d) teach to mastery, and (c) involve parents as partners in their child's education.

Dissemination

The results of the project will be shared with all exceptional education staff, principals, and central office administrators. This will be done by newsletters and/or presentations. Parents will be informed about the results through PTO and PEP presentations. The community will be made aware of the project through newspaper articles such as the one in Appendix V.

Surrounding school districts have begun to hear of the project and have requested to come visit the project classrooms. These requests will be granted and information will be freely shared with interested districts.

The project manager plans to present the project findings at the state Council for Exceptional Children in the spring. All products of the project such as the S.O.S. Curriculum and Parents and Teachers Teaming for Success Handbook will be provided at cost to interested educators.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Compilation of Regular Teacher Responses to Survey

N = 46

Survey Items with Responses and Percent of Teachers Making the Response

1. How many students do you have leaving your room each day to go to another teacher for special help?

   Total 303 **Mean 7**

2. In your opinion, how effective are these "pull out" programs?

   35% Very effective **59% Somewhat effective** **6% Ineffective**

3. How often does the special program teachers meet with regular teachers to collaborate and plan for the students they share?

   11% Weekly **37% Monthly** **17% Yearly** **35% Not at all**

4. Do you think L.D. students should take the BSAP?

   24% Yes **76% No**

   Why? (Most did not respond to why question.)

   Responses:
   1. **It depends on the student. To ask non-readers to take BSAP is ridiculous.**
   2. **If they do not take BSAP they feel less accountable for their education.**
   3. **Unless L.D. teacher recommends it.**
   4. **Some L.D. students are able to take the test, but most are not.**
   5. **They should take BSAP but their scores should not count against the school.**

Appendix B

Compilation of L.D. Teacher Responses to Survey

N = 12

Survey Items with Number Making Response

1. What percent of your time is spent in direct instruction of reading?

   (9) Less than 5% (2) 10% (1) 25% (0) More than 50%

2. Do you presently have written curriculum guides?

   (0) Yes (12) No

3. Do you think curriculum guides would be helpful to you?

   (12) Yes (0) No

4. Do the regular and special teachers in your school who share the same students find time to collaborate?

   (5) Yes (7) No

5. If yes, how often?

   (3) Weekly (2) Monthly (0) Yearly

   If no, why?

   (5) Lack of time in schedule (2) Don't know, just have not.

6. In your opinion, how many L.D. students presently taught by you will earn a high school diploma?

   (5) Less than 5% (2) 10% (4) 25% (1) More than 50%

7. Additional Comments

   a. **I think that collaboration with regular teachers is important, especially at the middle school level.**

   b. **The cooperative regular teachers and I collaborate, but it is sometime difficult to get some regular teachers' cooperation.**

   c. **I have to catch regular teachers when they have a free moment to discuss students who are mainstreamed.**

Appendix B continued

Compilation of L.D. Teacher Responses to Survey (continued)

N = 12

Survey Items with Number Making Response

- d. Regular education teachers often do not feel that L.D. students need extra considerations. Often collaborations are not successful. Some do not want to share plans. Others are more than cooperative and collaboration is extremely beneficial when they are.
- e. Lower grade teachers collaborate more than upper grades.
- f. More time is needed for collaboration.
- g. I have wanted a curriculum guide for many years. I'm very excited about the prospects of having one.
- h. I initiate as much collaboration as I can; it depends on how I am scheduled for lunch, duties, planning, etc. I see some teachers more than others.
- i. Rapport is fairly good between the two resource teachers and the regular education teachers at my school

Appendix C

Questionnaire*
N=69

1. Standardized test results are frequently reported to the community by the media. Are you pleased with the scores of your school and/or district?

   (14) Yes (53) No (2) Don't Know

2. Study/information management skills (SIMS) are defined as those competencies that enable students to locate, interpret, remember, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and utilize data from a variety of sources. Based on test results, do you think the students in your school need more emphasis on SIMS?

   (55) Yes (14) No (0) Don't Know

3. Which one of the following components would you most like to see strengthened in your school/district?

   (19) Collaborative Efforts Between Professionals (i.e. teachers, librarians, counselors, etc.)
   (16) Social Skills Instruction (caring about self and others)
   (27) Study Skills/Learning Strategies Curriculum
   (7) Parent Involvement

4. Name two things you especially like about your school or district.

   Responses varied with 96% indicating the following:

   (30) Relatively small class size

   (68) Friendly people

   (40) Caring teachers and administrators

5. Make two suggestions of problems you would like someone to work on in your school or district.

   (42) Written curriculum which suggests sequence of skills

   (40) More planning time for teachers

   (31) Discipline

   (13) More instructional materials

   (10) Improved facilities

   (2) Parent involvement

*Note: The number of educators responding to each item is recorded in parenthesis.

Appendix D

Analysis of Objectives on IEP Documents for Fifth-Grade Target Students, 1991-1992

N=17

School	Student #	Total # Of Objectives	#BSAP Reading Objectives	# Objectives Continued From 1990-1991
A	1	12	3	1
	3	11	0	0
	5	10	2	1
C	16	6	2	3
	17	7	1	2
E	26	8	4	3
	27	8	3	3
	32	12	3	2
F(1)	38	0	0	0
	39	15	3	1
	40	6	2	1
F(2)	43	10	3	0
	44	6	2	0
G(1)	47	39	2	4
	48	8	2	1
	49	28	4	1
	50	17	1	4
Total	-	**203**	**37**	**27**
Mean	-	**12**	**2**	**2**

Appendix E

Analysis of Objectives on IEP Documents for Sixth-Grade Target Students, 1991-1992

N=17

School	Student #	Total # Of Objectives	#BSAP Reading Objectives	# Objectives Continued From 1990-1991
A	2	20	15	20
	4	12	1	2
	6	13	2	4
	7	12	0	0
	8	16	1	0
B	9	4	0	0
C	18	6	0	2
E	28	12	5	3
	29	8	1	1
	30	8	3	2
	31	13	4	3
F	33	10	3	2
	34	8	2	0
	35	10	0	0
	36	14	0	0
G	51	9	2	2
	52	8	4	2
	53	8	2	0
	37	11	2	0
TOTAL	-	**202**	**47**	**25**
MEAN	-	**12**	**3**	**1**

Appendix F

Analysis of Objectives on IEP Documents for Seventh-Grade Target Students, 1991-1992

N=18

School	Student Number	Total Number of Objectives	# BSAP Reading Objectives	# Objectives from 1990-1991
B	10	6	2	1
	11	6	3	2
	12	10	2	1
	13	6	0	0
	14	8	2	1
	15	6	2	2
D	19	7	3	1
	20	8	2	1
	21	12	3	2
	22	10	2	1
	23	8	1	0
	24	10	0	2
	25	6	2	1
F	37	8	3	1
G	54	14	2	0
	55			
	56	11	4	Began 1992
Total	-	**136**	**33**	**16**
MEAN	-	**8**	**2**	**1**

Appendix G

Analysis of Objectives on IEP Documents for Eighth-Grade Target Students, 1991-1992

N=4

School	Student Number	Total Number of Objectives	# BSAP Reading Objectives	# Objectives from 1990-1991
F	41	10	2	1
	42	8	1	0
	45	16	2	0
	46	12	3	2
TOTAL	-	**46**	**8**	**3**
MEAN	-	**11**	**2**	**1**

Appendix H

Board Report

401 West Boulevard Chesterfield, S.C. 29709

Chesterfield County School District Special Board Meeting February 24, 1992

Approximately 100 residents of the Jefferson area appeared at the board meeting to show their support for the construction of a new Jefferson Elementary School

Three of the group, Tim Williams, Peggy Miller, and Mack Miller, addressed the board about the community's desire to see a new school built. Williams notes, "Our purpose in being here this evening is to show you that we support Phase II of the school district's Building and Renovation Plan and want Jefferson Elementary School to remain at the top of the priority list."

* *

Superintendent Joe Bradham presented the board Phase II of the school district's Building Renovation Plan.

Bradham reminded the board that they had seen the original Phase II proposals in 1989, but had asked the administration to bring back the proposals when the Phase I projects had been completed. Bradham said the Phase II proposals he was bringing to the board at this time contained only minor changes from the original proposals.

The board was presented a table of population projections for Chesterfield County through the school year 1996-97 which showed a slight decrease in the number of student in the school district. Bradham said he has used another formula for projecting the school population which indicated a slightly greater number than in the state's projections. "However," he said, "no matter which projections you look at, it appears that our student population is going to show slight, but positive, growth between now and the year 2000. The purpose in looking at this information is just to make sure we build buildings that will meet our needs for many years to come."

The first proposals in the Phase II plan call for the construction of new schools in Jefferson and Cheraw. Bradham said, "The worst school buildings we have are Jefferson Elementary, Robert Smalls in Cheraw, and Cheraw Elementary. None meet modern standards, and all need to be addressed by the board immediately."

The Phase II proposal recommends a new school in Jefferson to house child development through grade eight. It was suggested the new school be built adjacent to the present gymnasium, and, once completed, raze the old school. The old cafeteria would also be demolished, and a new cafeteria constructed.

In Cheraw, Phase II recommends that the Robert Smalls and Cheraw Elementary schools be abandoned and a new middle school concept be implemented. The middle school would house grades five through eight, and the third and fourth grades would be relocated to Long Junior High.

Bradham told the board the State Department of Education suggests two "rule of thumb" as guidelines when considering building sites. "If it is constructed of combustible materials, the state does not recommend putting more money into it." he said. "Also, if the remodeling cost is 50 percent or more of the cost of new construction, the state recommends you go with the new construction."

Appendix H continued

Phase II also addresses other facility needs. It states, "Continued facility improvements are needed at Ruby, Edwards, Long Junior High, and Chesterfield Middle. Also, McBee Elementary needs permanent classroom additions for music, art, and computer technology. Pageland Middle School needs a new cafeteria and library. CCSD has made some improvement in each of these sites since 1989 with significant repairs to both Ruby and Long Junior High. Additional repairs, particularly a roof, are needed at Ruby."

The final recommendation in Phase II calls for the disposal of sites that are presently abandoned or will be abandoned as a part of the Phase II plans. They include Mt. Crognan School, Shannon Elementary in Jefferson, Cheraw Elementary, Robert Smalls, Cheraw Primary Annex, and all portables. Bradham said there were in excess of 40 portable units now being used throughout the school district. he noted that the funds generated from the sale of these abandoned sites could be used toward the construction of new facilities.

He then pointed out the options available to the school district for financing the projects. lease purchase, he noted, is a new method being used by several school districts in the states that allows yearly payments to be made from operational proceeds rather than debt retirement. Another option is a public referendum, he said. As of July 1, 1993, Bradham said the school district would have almost $3 million available through debt retirement millage, but the cost of the recommended projects would exceed that amount.

"We would have to increase millage any way you look at it," board member Bill Matthews said, "so, to me a referendum is the way to go. That way, the money will be earmarked every year for this. It will take a concerted effort by everyone in the county, but it can succeed."

"School referendums have been failing at an alarming rate around the state," board chairman Malloy Evans said, "but, with a positive attitude, a lot of planning, and a lot of work, we can pull it off. But it will take the best efforts of everyone in the county."

Bradham told the board that all options for financing would be explored. He said "experts" would be called in to discuss the pros and cons of lease purchase, and added that the school district could also consider a combination of lease purchase and debt retirement. "Chesterfield County School District's debt retirement is moderate to low compared to other school districts in the state. At 15.46 mills, ours is very reasonable. Several school districts are in excess of 50 mills," he said.

Matthews added, "We have to remember that through all of this that we are working with our greatest asset - our children. If we don't take care of them, nobody will."

An executive session was held following the meeting.

****

Appendix I

Students Offered Success Curriculum (S.O.S.)

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Students Offered Success Curriculum (S.O.S.)

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Appendix J

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

TITLE OF INSERVICE ACTIVITY: Direct-Instruction Workshop

DATE OF ACTIVITY: August 14, 1992

PRESENTER(S): Lea Carroll

DIRECTIONS: Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale.

1 - Strongly Agree	2 - Agree Somewhat
3 - Disagree Somewhat	4 - Strongly Disagree

N = 9	1	2	3	4
1. I was made aware of the goals and/or objectives of the inservice	8	1		
2. The information presented will be helpful to me in my present situation.	7	2		
3. The inservice was well-organized and interesting.	9			
4. The goals and/or objectives of the inservice were achieved.	8	1		
5. There were opportunities for active participation.	9			
6. The presenter demonstrated knowledge of the topic.	9			

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Appendix K

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

TITLE OF INSERVICE ACTIVITY: Direct-Instruction Workshop

DATE OF ACTIVITY: October 17, 1991

PRESENTER(S): Lea Carroll

DIRECTIONS: Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale.

1 - Strongly Agree	2 - Agree Somewhat
3 - Disagree Somewhat	4 - Strongly Disagree

N = 9	1	2	3	4
1. I was made aware of the goals and/or objectives of the inservice	9			
2. The information presented will be helpful to me in my present situation.	9			
3. The inservice was well-organized and interesting.	9			
4. The goals and/or objectives of the inservice were achieved.	9			
5. There were opportunities for active participation.	7	2		
6. The presenter demonstrated knowledge of the topic.	9			

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Appendix L

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Was the newly developed curriculum guide, Students Offered Success, helpful in writing IEP documents for 1992-93?

*1) **1** **Not Helpful**	15) **2** **Helpful**

2. Additional activities will make the guide even more useful.

1 **Disagree**	15) **2** **Agree**

3. Are you willing to send teaching activities, strategies, and resources to be included in the guide for specific objectives?

1) **1** **Unwilling**	14) **2** **Willing**

Comments or suggestions:

1) It made my IEP writing much easier and faster. I had more time to concentrate on finding just the right objective. It was definitely helpful.

2) The curriculum guide, SOS, was of great help to me. In addition to helping in writing IEP's, it also will be a valuable guide throughout the school year. Dealing with as many diversified learning problems as we do, the SOS guide is a quick reference for ideas and activities. Thanks to you and everyone else who developed the curriculum guide. I appreciate your input and guidance. I feel out department has gained a valuable resource and friend.

3) Very helpful, especially in behavior area!

4) Thank you so much for all your help this year, especially in getting started. I will not be teaching LD next year. I will be teaching kindergarten at Cheraw Primary.

*5) I have been using skills found in a basic skills activity book to help me in writing IEP's. I have used this book for 5 - 6 years. If I did not have this book the curriculum guide would have helped me very much.

6. I found the guide to be extremely helpful. Thank you.

7. We have been needing something like this for years!

8. I would suggest that future curriculum committees include representatives from the high school level.

Appendix M

Parents and Educators Teaming for Student Success

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Appendix N

Problem-Solving Conference Planning Sheet

Teacher____ Grade________

Student's Name________________________________

Parent(s) or Guardian___________________________

Date of Conference_____________________________

1. Begin with a statement of concern, updating the situation.
2. Describe the specific problem. Present documentation.
3. Describe what you have already done to solve the problem.
4. Get parental input on the problem.
5. Get parental input on how to solve the problem.
6. Tell parents what you will do to help solve the problem.
7. Explain what you need the parent to do to solve the problem.
8. Let the parent know that you're confident that the problem can be worked out.
9. Tell the parent that there will be follow-up contact from you.
10. Recap the conference.

Notes;____

____

____

Appendix O

Exceptional Education Staff Development

Direct Reading Instruction

August 14, 1992

Welcome	Marilyn Martin
Introduction and Overview	Mary Stephens
Direct Instruction in Teaching Reading	Lea Carroll
Corrective Reading	
Reading Mastery	
Small Group Practice Sessions	
Closure and Evaluation	

Appendix P

The Philosophy of Chesterfield County School District

Parent/Educator Partnership

The Parent/Educator Partnership of Chesterfield County School District is based on the philosophy that parents and educators working together can most effectively enhance the educational opportunities for school children with special education needs.

By establishing a basis for direct and equal partnership between parents and educators, the Partnership will enable parents and educators to cultivate close working relationships that ultimately result in opportunities for children with special needs to develop their potentials.

The growth of parents and educators participating in the Partnership will develop a mutual respect of attitudes, values, capabilities, concerns and involvement, creating a common bond that draws closer the parents, the educators, and their communities.

The Partnership has a group purpose, maintaining vigilance not to lose sight of its goals and objectives. The philosophical foundation of the Partnership serves as a reminder to place the common good of children with special needs above personal goals.

Appendix Q

PARENTS AS READING PARTNERS CONTRACT

Read 15 minutes every day

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

OUR CONTRACT

I hereby promise to listen (or read) to my child at home every day for 15 minutes during the month of ____________________

Parent's Name (Please Print) ____

My child's name is ____

Parents:
1) Put a / mark in a box for each day you and your child read together for at least 15 minutes
2) You may wish to write in the dates for this month
3) Have your child return the completed calendar to his/her teacher at the end of the month
4) If you and your child read together for a minimum of 20 days this month, your child will receive a special reward

Appendix R

Chesterfield County School District Parent/Educator Partnership
Chesterfield Middle School
September 28, 1992

Educational Fair for Parents of Exceptional Education Children

Welcome	*Jessie Gaskins, Principal* *Chesterfield Middle School*	
	Joe T. Bradham, Superintendent	
Overview of Exceptional Education and Parent/Educator Partnership Initiative	*Marilyn Martin, Director* *Exceptional Education Program*	
Concurrent Sessions (10 minute presentations)		
"Characteristics of Students with a Learning Disability (LD)"	*Mary Lou Long*	*Room #1*
"Characteristics of Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)"	*Jenny Baker*	*Room #2*
"Characteristics of Students with Educable Mental Disability (EMH)"	*Janice Moore*	*Room #3*
"Characteristics of Three to Five Year Old Students with Disabilities"	*Elizabeth Roberts*	*Room #4*
"Characteristics of Students with Profound Mental Disabilities (PMH) and Characteristics of Students with Trainable Mental Disorders (TMH)"	*Karen Helms*	*Room #5*
"Characteristics of Students with Emotional Disabilities (EH) and Characteristics of Students with Autistic Disabilities"	*Alan Cranston*	*Room #6*
"Characteristics of Occupational Therapy (OT) Programs for Students with Disabilities"	*Gini Eddins*	*Room #7*
"Characteristics of Students with Speech Disabilities"	*Betti Rogers*	*Room #8*
"Characteristics of Students with Orthopedic Disabilities (OH), Hearing Disabilities (HH), Vision Disabilities (VH) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	*Marilyn Martin* *Donna Pittman*	*Room #9*
Refreshments		
Awarding of Door Prizes	*Gary Leaird, President* *PEP Rally*	
Adjournment	*Gary Leaird, President* *PEP Rally*	

Appendix S

Classroom Observation Record

Teacher______________________________ Date____________________

Direct Instruction Techniques Observed:

Teacher directed large group lesson ______

Teacher directed small group lesson ______

Guided practice ______

Cooperative learning group ______

Other:____

____

____

Feedback:

Lesson was effective ______

Lesson needed improvement in the following areas:

- Pacing ______
- Questioning techniques ______
- Student choral/individual responding ______
- Reinforcement provided to students ______
- Corrective procedures ______
- More time on task ______

Conference Notes:

Appendix T

Chesterfield County School District

August 10, 1992

Dear Parents:

As you know, school begins in a few weeks. Many interesting things have been planned for the new school year. We will continue the Corrective Reading Program which we started last school year. Your child's progress in reading will be closely monitored and shared with you.

In addition, we hope you will be able to become involved in planned activities which will greatly help your child be more successful in school this year. The following activities have been planned for you.

Corrective Reading Open House	September 10
Exceptional Education Fair	September 28
Fall Parent Conference Night	October 9
Learning Styles Workshop	November 16
Winter Parent Conference Night	January 14
Job Opportunities for Exceptional Children	January 21
Characteristics of ADD Child	February 15

Please put these dates on your calendar now. You will be hearing more about these important events as the time gets closer. The important thing for you to remember is you are needed as a partner in the education of your child.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Stephens

Appendix U

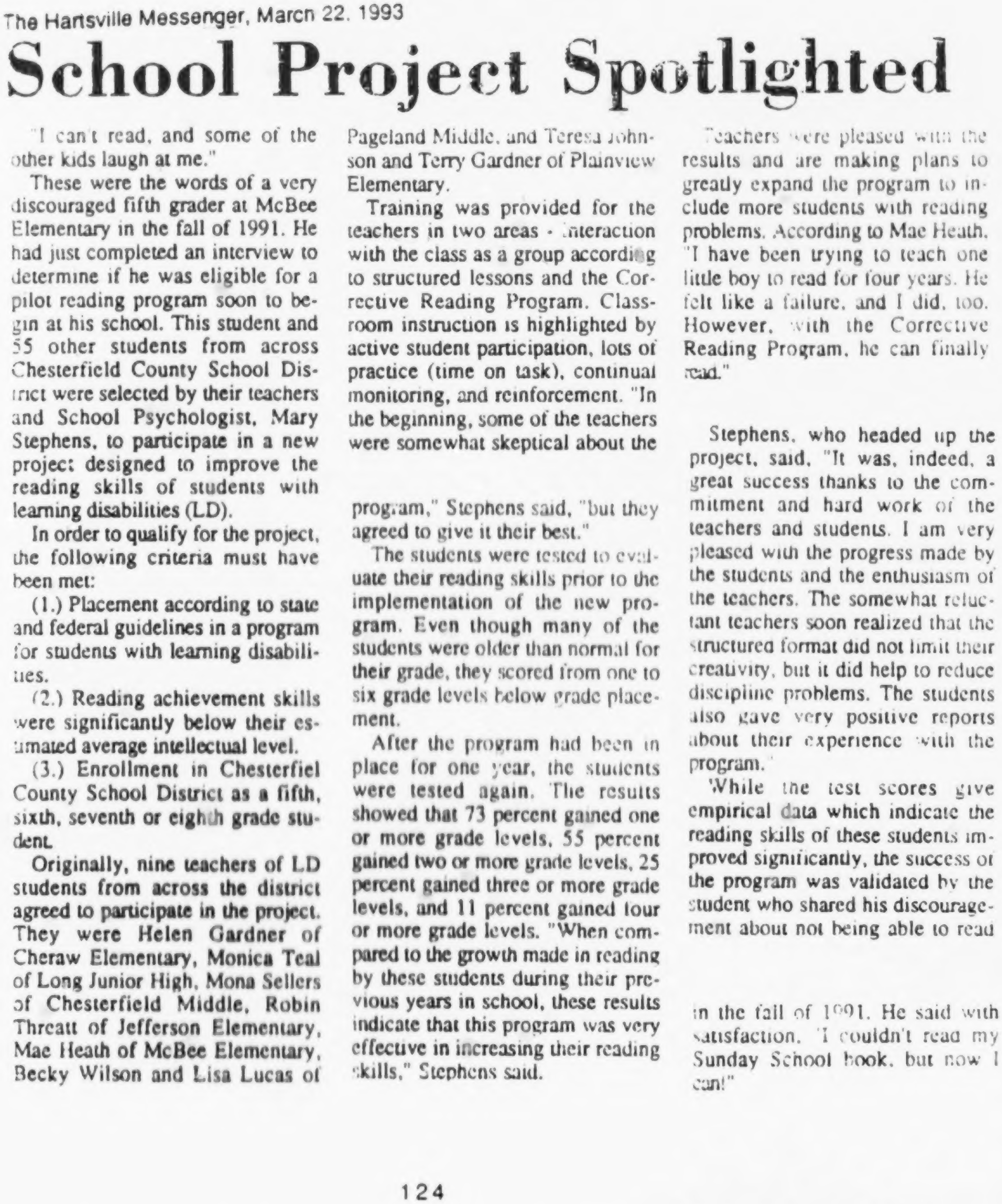
Evaluation Form

Activity Title________________________ Presenter________________________

		Yes	No
1.	Did the activity meet the stated objective?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
2.	Was presenter understanding of the problem?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
3.	Did presenter explain purpose clearly?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
4.	Did activity meet your individual need?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
5.	Was handout material explained and demonstrated?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
6.	Did you feel at ease during the activity?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		
7.	Was enough time allowed for questions and answers?	______	______
	Comment:________________________________		
	____		

Appendix V

Newspaper Article



The Hartsville Messenger, March 22, 1993

School Project Spotlighted

"I can't read, and some of the other kids laugh at me."

These were the words of a very discouraged fifth grader at McBee Elementary in the fall of 1991. He had just completed an interview to determine if he was eligible for a pilot reading program soon to begin at his school. This student and 55 other students from across Chesterfield County School District were selected by their teachers and School Psychologist, Mary Stephens, to participate in a new project designed to improve the reading skills of students with learning disabilities (LD).

In order to qualify for the project, the following criteria must have been met:

(1.) Placement according to state and federal guidelines in a program for students with learning disabilities.

(2.) Reading achievement skills were significantly below their estimated average intellectual level.

(3.) Enrollment in Chesterfiel County School District as a fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth grade student.

Originally, nine teachers of LD students from across the district agreed to participate in the project. They were Helen Gardner of Cheraw Elementary, Monica Teal of Long Junior High, Mona Sellers of Chesterfield Middle, Robin Threatt of Jefferson Elementary, Mae Heath of McBee Elementary, Becky Wilson and Lisa Lucas of Pageland Middle, and Teresa Johnson and Terry Gardner of Plainview Elementary.

Training was provided for the teachers in two areas - interaction with the class as a group according to structured lessons and the Corrective Reading Program. Classroom instruction is highlighted by active student participation, lots of practice (time on task), continual monitoring, and reinforcement. "In the beginning, some of the teachers were somewhat skeptical about the program," Stephens said, "but they agreed to give it their best."

The students were tested to evaluate their reading skills prior to the implementation of the new program. Even though many of the students were older than normal for their grade, they scored from one to six grade levels below grade placement.

After the program had been in place for one year, the students were tested again. The results showed that 73 percent gained one or more grade levels, 55 percent gained two or more grade levels, 25 percent gained three or more grade levels, and 11 percent gained four or more grade levels. "When compared to the growth made in reading by these students during their previous years in school, these results indicate that this program was very effective in increasing their reading skills," Stephens said.

Teachers were pleased with the results and are making plans to greatly expand the program to include more students with reading problems. According to Mae Heath, "I have been trying to teach one little boy to read for four years. He felt like a failure, and I did, too. However, with the Corrective Reading Program, he can finally read."

Stephens, who headed up the project, said, "It was, indeed, a great success thanks to the commitment and hard work of the teachers and students. I am very pleased with the progress made by the students and the enthusiasm of the teachers. The somewhat reluctant teachers soon realized that the structured format did not limit their creativity, but it did help to reduce discipline problems. The students also gave very positive reports about their experience with the program."

While the test scores give empirical data which indicate the reading skills of these students improved significantly, the success of the program was validated by the student who shared his discouragement about not being able to read in the fall of 1991. He said with satisfaction, "I couldn't read my Sunday School book, but now I can!"

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Leadership Agenda

An analysis of my leadership behavior during the Education Leadership Appraisal (ELA) Study Area indicated that my primary behavior style is that of a supporter. Strengths were indicated in the areas of initiative, planning and organizing, group leadership, and written communication. Weaknesses were evident in decisiveness and political behavior.

Has my basic leadership style changed? I really think that I am still primarily a supporter, but I have become much more analytical due to the tasks involved in the Education Leadership Program. The program has forced me to take a stand on some issues, thus, strengthening the ability to be decisive.

Likewise, political behaviors, which were relatively weak in the beginning of the program, have been strengthened by frequent use. In order to plan and implement my MARP, the political behaviors of identifying and utilizing appropriate resources and people to work toward reaching the objectives were necessary.

It seems that my strengths were at least maintained. My relatively strong initiative must be still intact because I am the first in my cluster to get my MARP final report ready. Effective planning and organizing were required to develop the S.O.S. Curriculum in five months. Group leadership skills were used throughout the MARP as I worked with groups of teachers, committees, and parents. Finally, written communication was required to develop the curriculum, the programs for parents, and the MARP proposal, interim, and final report.

As I reflect on the growth made during the last three years, it pleases me greatly. Although I still have areas that need improvement, I sincerely believe that I am a much stronger educational leader now than I was before starting the Nova program.

My doctoral program is coming to an end, but learning will go on forever. As I continue to learn, I will become even more effective as a leader. After all, the essence of education is learning!